ABSTRACT OF THESIS

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Title of Thesis William Robertson Nicoll (1851-1923) and Religious Journalism in the Nineteenth Century

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Problems and Limits: Since William Robertson Nicoll arose out of the background of nineteenth century religious journalism, and because he became editor of the religious journal, the British Weekly, prominent in the fields of politics, religion, and literature, his influence led vast numbers of people to greater national, social and religious efforts.

Procedure: The status and growth of religious journalism in the nineteenth century was surveyed in an effort to understand the background out of which arose William Robertson Nicoll as the editor of the religious journal, the British Weekly. The influence and power of religious journalism during this same period was found to be in relation to its mechanical growth, to its freedom from taxes and to the vast new reading public which then was coming into existence. The early life and background of William Robertson Nicoll was shown in order to emphasize the part it played in the development of his ability to become a religious journalist. This was accomplished through the study of his biographies, his own letters and writings, interviews with Nicoll as written in newspapers and periodicals, personal interviews with Nicoll's immediate family and relatives, and remarks about and evaluations of Nicoll as recorded in the books, reminiscences, biographies, and histories concerning Nicoll's time. Nicoll's aims, methods, and objectives in the establishment of the British Weekly were examined, using the same methods just mentioned, followed by the attempt to show what he set out to do, what he did, and how he accomplished it. A further attempt was made, by examining Nicoll's writings as set forth in the pages of the British Weekly, to analyse the rôle he played in the realms of religion, politics and social problems, in the education struggle, in war-time, and in the affairs of the churches and the people.

Findings and Conclusions: It was found that religious journalism had a steady growth, a growth which became more apparent in the nineteenth century. It was also found that religious journalism attained its greatest stature, both physically and influentially, in the last twenty years of the nineteenth century. In this era William Robertson Nicoll became the editor of the British Weekly, and because of his religious background, his familiarity with literature and journalism and his keen understanding of his fellowman he became the outstanding religious journalist of the nineteenth century from the standpoint of his power and influence. He accomplished this by utilizing all of the improvements and facilities available to the press, by his knowledge and ability as a writer, of leaders and articles, by his keen and acute use of his office as editor, and by his judgment and common sense. Because of his religious knowledge he made vocal and prominent what became known as the Scottish school of theology and because of his literary knowledge he brought before the public the Scottish school of literature. And because of his journalistic knowledge he made the religious journal, the British Weekly, a persuasive and powerful Christian influence which in time made him one of the most potent personal forces in public life.

Use other side if necessary.

WILLIAM ROBERTSON NICOLL (1851-1923)
AND RELIGIOUS JOURNALISM IN THE NINETEENTH CENTURY

A Thesis

Submitted as Partial Fulfilment of the Requirements

for the Degree of Doctor of Philosophy

in the University of Edinburgh

by

George William Lawrence, Jr.

B.A., B.D.

1954

". . . Pardone me where I have erryd or made fawte, whyche yf ony be is of ygnorance and ageyn my wylle."

Caxton

Prefatory Notes

There exists no history of British religious journalism, nor is there in existence any comprehensive modern history of British journalism. Here and there among the books on journalism may be found references to religious periodicals. And now and then a periodical is mentioned in the history of a religious movement or a denomination, but nothing has been done to correlate all this material; the present work is not an attempt at such a correlation. I am too much in accord with Peel who said, "There is nothing more difficult to discover than the exact facts in regard to the religious periodical literature of the nineteenth century. There is nothing for which the student would be more grateful than a list of periodicals with facts about their editorship and ownership."[1] This difficulty arises from the elusiveness of facts concerning periodicals. One writer will call a paper by its full name, e.g. Christian Witness, while another writer, presupposing his readers to be familiar with the popular paper, calls it by its nickname e.g. Witness, thus sending the researcher from one extreme of the alphabet to the other. If years have intervened since the paper was popular, the researcher, at first, believes he has stumbled upon a new periodical. The same is true with dates. Should the date of a paper's beginning or ending show even a year's discrepancy, the student is never certain who is in error or whether one writer is simply referring to another edition or even a different paper by the same name. Many papers had names almost identical or at least very similar. This work is not intended to be a complete

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1 Peel, These Hundred Years, p. 414.

history, but the first chapter is devoted to a listing of the various types of religious periodicals, especially the more important ones, which existed in the nineteenth century. It is the only list of its kind available, and if, in the future, it forms the basis of a more comprehensive history of religious journalism, it will have served its purpose.

In any study of nineteenth century religious journalism one name will always predominate - that of William Robertson Nicoll. This book is intended to show how he came upon the journalistic stage when journalism was in its "golden age"; how he used all of the facilities at his disposal, and how, because of his ability, he became a real power and influence in the religious journalistic field. At the present time there are two biographies written about Nicoll. The first to be written was by Jane Stoddart, and although drawn from more intimate knowledge of the subject, ends with 1903, twenty years before Nicoll died. It includes nothing of his eventful life after that date. The second and more complete biography, by Darlow, is simply a combination of the first biography with many of Nicoll's letters, skilfully selected and expertly arranged. His short chapter on religious journalism is of value, and Nicoll's letters can be obtained nowhere else, but as for the life and works, these must be read with caution. Darlow's work was published in 1925 (two years after Nicoll's death) and therefore it did not benefit by all of the works and reminiscences published in later years by Nicoll's friends. In 1925, Nicoll's wife had not written her invaluable book of memories, nor had Bruce, Porritt, Peake, Riddell or Doran, to mention a few. Nor had many of the denominational and secular histories which give later evaluations and anecdotes concerning William Robertson Nicoll and the British Weekly been written. The present work seeks to close the gap

of the past twenty-nine years, to supplement the works already written and to show the power and the influence Nicoll had which only now can be put into perspective by the passing of time.

My approach to this study is to examine the background first, those conditions and environmental factors and training which prepared Nicoll's mind and adapted him for religious journalism. Then the study traces how Nicoll used this preparation, when through circumstances, he became a journalist, and what he aimed to do and what he accomplished. I have done this in so far as possible by studying those things which Nicoll himself wrote: his letters, his articles, his publications, speeches, sermons, and leaders. I have also made use of interviews with friends and relations of Nicoll and have gleaned Nicolliana out of the writings and reminiscences of those who knew him intimately. Where contradictions occur the files of the British Weekly and Nicoll's writings have been taken as the final word. Nicoll's letters, for the most part, are still available in his effects and many have been seen by the author. References to those which have been published have been given in order to make the reading of them in their complete form more easily available to any future students.

Nicoll, according to his wife, preferred having his last name known as Robertson Nicoll in order to distinguish him from the other Nicoll's and Nicol's which were extant in his time. Nicoll and W.R.N. have been used in this work for brevity's sake. I have tried to show him as a religious journalist and as a Christian, as a Protestant Nonconformist, whose Nonconformity was always subordinate to his Protestantism, as his Protestantism was to his Christianity.

There are many persons in whose debt I find myself. I would like to thank all of the ministers, journalists, editors and publishers who have granted me interviews or have answered my letters, giving not only words of advice, but in many cases, books and cuttings. I am also grateful to several of the wives of deceased journalists for their helpful information. Mrs. Hubert W. Peet gave me many effects left by her husband. I am grateful also to the many librarians and their staffs who have been bothered by my numerous requests for heavy and cumbersome periodicals.

To some I am grateful almost beyond expression. The Reverend Professor W. S. Tindal, O.B.E., D.D., and the Reverend Principal Charles S. Duthie, D.D., of the University of Edinburgh, rendered assistance that was particularly valuable and helpful. Without the friendly suggestions, encouragements and help of the latter, it is safe to say that this work might never have been accomplished. Also, I owe a real debt to the Reverend Andrew Graham, M.A., B.Com., who gave up many hours of his time to read over the manuscript, suggesting changes in style and structure. Furthermore I would like to express my deep and sincere appreciation to the entire Robertson Nicoll family. Lady Robertson Nicoll, with her agile mind and keen memory not only helped me immeasurably but invited me to visit the huge library of W.R.N.'s father at the Old Manse, Lumsden, and allowed me the unlimited use of any and all of Nicoll's effects. She read the chapters concerning Nicoll's life and made many helpful suggestions followed by the words, "I have just been reading your MS & I am charmed with it. What infinite trouble you must have taken to accumulate all the details & facts! May you be rewarded by

success."[1] My most grateful thanks go to Nicoll's daughters who have read chapters and offered suggestions. But especially I wish to thank the younger daughter, Mrs. Grange Kirkcaldy, for the use of her books, her general kindness and helpfulness and her steady flow of correspondence during this work. One letter in particular I value. That letter contained the statement, "My mother has also read these chapters and we both congratulate you on the very careful way you have been through all the material, and think you have presented a very accurate picture of the early background."[2]

Needless to say my deepest heartfelt thanks go to my typist who not only typed and retyped the manuscript, corrected and criticized, but gave the help that only she could give as my wife and the mother of our children.

My indebtedness to other scholars in the same and allied fields of study is difficult, I find, to assess. I have made acknowledgement wherever I have been conscious of a debt. If I have borrowed anything without acknowledgement, it has been done unwittingly and I offer my apologies. It is hardly necessary to say that for any errors of judgment or fact I alone am responsible.

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1 Letter to the writer from Lady Robertson Nicoll, January 24, 1954.
2 Letter to the writer from Mrs. Grange Kirkcaldy, January 26, 1954.

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CHAPTER I

Religious Journalism in the Nineteenth Century

Religious journalism, in one form or another, is as old as communication itself.[1] Its history extends from hagiographical scratchings down to the current religious quarterlies. In the British Isles, with which this study is concerned, the same is true. But it was the printing press which actually gave impetus to the widespread use of the written word. Ever since printing was introduced into England by Caxton in 1476 there has been a religious strain running through the productions of the printing press. This strain has kept pace with the developments in printing up to the 20th century. Each directory of the press, as it has been printed in successive years, includes in its classified index more periodicals under the heading "religious" than under any other classification.

The greatest strides were made in the 19th century, although small seedlings sprouted uncultivated in the censored and taxed eras leading up to it. With the abolition of taxes and the enforcement of education, the forest of religious periodicals reached its full growth. As year followed year, press improvements multiplied. In the Victorian Era the press, and all its branches, reached unprecedented heights. "One of the most remarkable phenomena of the Victorian Era was the growth in scope and influence of the printed page. This had a profound effect upon

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1 One writer facetiously states that the first religious news was the dove bringing the olive leaf back to Noah. See _____, About Newspapers, (Edinburgh: St. Giles Printing Co., 1888), pp. 1 f.

the religious life of the country, even when it took a secular form."[1]

The religious press in the 18th century foreshadowed that of the 19th century, and in a way prophesied the trends to be. Examples of these 18th century periodicals are easily found in England and Scotland but not so much in Ireland, and important types should be indicated.

Of these pre-19th century papers Scotland had her share. Among these are Civic Sermons to the People published in Dundee in 1792, An Exhortation to the Inhabitants of the South Parish of Glasgow and the Hearers in the College Kirk, edited semi-weekly by the Rev. John Gillies in Glasgow from 1750 to 1751, the Polyhmnia published in 1799, and The Religious Magazine or Christian's Storehouse, begun as a monthly in Edinburgh in 1760.[2] The Scots Magazine which first appeared in 1739 should not be overlooked, because from its inception it included many religious articles and general views of religion in Great Britain. The Weekly History, published in Glasgow in 1741, has been called an imitator of the Scots Magazine, the "first religious periodical to appear in Scotland."[3]

"The Scottish Congregationalist can claim to be the oldest religious periodical but one in this country, probably in the whole world, and certainly is the oldest to have maintained continuous monthly publication."[4] This periodical was originally published as The Missionary Magazine in 1796. It then changed in 1814 to the Christian Herald, and in 1835 to the Scottish Congregational Magazine. In 1881, it assumed

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1 L. E. Elliott-Binns, Religion in the Victorian Era, (London: Lutterworth Press, 1936), p. 328.

2 For a more complete account see M. E. Craig, The Scottish Periodical Press, 1750-1789, (Edinburgh: Oliver and Boyd, 1931), passim.

3 R.M.W. Cowan, The Newspaper in Scotland, (Glasgow: George Outram and Co., Ltd., 1946), p. 72.

4 "One Hundred and Fifty Years of the 'S.C.'," The Scottish Congregationalist, January, 1946.

its present title, The Scottish Congregationalist, taking the place of the Congregational Magazine and the Advance which had been published particularly for Congregationalists in the West of Scotland.

Religious journalism was truly in its infancy, but real attempts were being made. The beginnings of modern religious journalism, of any lasting character, may be said to have commenced in the last quarter of the 18th century.

The Gospel Magazine with the subtitle "or Spiritual Library" began in 1766 and ran until 1773. From 1774 until 1783, the Rev. A. M. Toplady edited it with the subtitle, "A Treasury of Divine Knowledge." In 1784, it merged with the Spiritual Magazine, which changed its own name, and finally disappeared. In 1796, it reappeared as the Gospel Magazine and Theological Review and continued until 1805.

In 1778, the Arminian Magazine was founded by John Wesley. The name was changed in a new series in 1798 to the Methodist Magazine and again in 1821 to the Wesleyan Methodist Magazine. As such it continued consistently for over half a century. It presented divinity, defences of truth, biography, illustrations of nature and facts of providence. It had been founded, mainly, for the purpose of counteracting the Calvinistic tendencies of the Gospel Magazine.[1]

The close of the 18th century also saw the inception of the missionary magazines, which since then have been published by every society. The oldest of these was started in 1790 by the Moravian Missions and was titled, Periodical Accounts.

The Evangelical Magazine was begun in 1793 by a group of Churchmen

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1 H. W. Peet, "Religious Press," Times Anniversary Number, January 1, 1935.

and Nonconformists, some of whom, along with the first editor, the Rev. John Eyre, an Evangelical clergyman of Hackney, had also helped found the Bible Society and the London Missionary Society. The purpose of this periodical was to "fill up the interval between its readers' religious duties and necessary avocations," and to supply "a manly and impartial review of religious books which at present have none to usher them into the world but infidel and illiberal critics," and also to give "well authenticated accounts of triumphant deaths and remarkable providences."[1] Thus before the 19th century begins the religious press is found stating its dual rôle, which later became universally implied, of providing news as well as opinion. The Evangelical Magazine was conducted by the editor, and managed by a committee, the profits going into a fund for widows. In 1905, this magazine changed its name to the Evangelical British Missionary, and is today the organ of the Colonial Missionary Society.

Improvement marches tardily, not precipitately, and from these humble beginnings in the 18th century, as if by a fissiparous process, the religious press grew into the influential and powerful branch of journalism of the 19th century.

At the beginning of the new century in 1801, the earliest Roman Catholic periodical in the form of a magazine was published in Britain. It was the Catholic Magazine and Reflector, issued from January to July of 1801.

In 1802, some members of the Clapham Sect[2] brought out the Christian Observer. Zachary Macaulay was the editor and the paper

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1 Ibid.
2 The name given in the earlier years of the nineteenth century to the Evangelical Party in the Church of England.

proved a real asset to the Evangelical party.

The Religious Monitor appeared in 1803 and after sixteen years of existence it closed its ledgers in 1819.

In 1805, the Eclectic Review, more intellectual in its appeal than the Christian Observer, attracted Nonconformists and Evangelical Churchmen as well. Josiah Conder became its editor in 1814. He had such contributors as Dr. Chalmers, Robert Southey, Robert Hall, and John Foster, but even then he complained that it had long ceased to be a source of profit.[1] After 1850 attempts were made to breathe new life into it, but at the end of 1868, it ceased publication.

A Baptist of Tiverton, Thomas Smith, founded the Baptist Magazine in 1809. This failed to celebrate its centenary as the year 1904 saw its demise.

In 1816, the Roman Catholic Orthodox Journal was begun by William Eusebius Andrews. It appeared weekly until it ended in 1830 because of the lack of sufficient support.

> The real beginnings of Catholic periodical literature were made more than twenty years later by which time the growth of the Catholic body in its newly won freedom, the progress of Catholic education, and the interests excited by the Tractarian movement had all combined to supply a wider circle of readers.[2]

Mr. Andrews was responsible not only for the Orthodox Journal but also the Catholic Advocate of Civil and Religious Liberty, a short lived weekly newspaper (1820-1821); the weekly Andrew's Penny Orthodox Journal (1833-1835) which later became Andrew's Weekly Orthodox Journal (March 8 to June 27, 1836), changing its name to the London and Dublin

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1 Eustace R. Conder, Josiah Conder: A Memoir, (London: John Snow, 1857), pp. 125 ff.

2 A. H. Atteridge, "Periodical Literature, Catholic," Catholic Encyclopedia, (London: Caxton Publishing Co., 1911), XI, p. 673.

Journal of Orthodox Useful Knowledge until 1843, when it reverted to the name Orthodox Journal; and the Catholic Vindicator, a weekly aimed at counterbalancing a paper called the Protestant, which had a short existence from December 5, 1818, to December 4, 1819. Under a pseudonym he had a large share in the management of the Catholic Miscellany (1822-1830). Andrews was also responsible for the Truth Teller, a weekly newspaper begun September 23, 1824, and published for one year.

The British Critic, a monthly magazine for the Orthodox, or moderate High Churchman, began in 1814. In 1826 it became united with the Quarterly Theological Review which had begun in 1825, and was published from then on until the end as the British Critic, Quarterly Theological Review.

At this point, especially in Scotland, there was a growing concern about things ecclesiastical. This was partly due to the growing power of the Evangelical party inspired by the vigour of Dr. Andrew Thomson and the dynamic personality of Chalmers. The progress of the Evangelical party was accelerated in 1810 by the founding of the monthly Edinburgh Christian Instructor by Dr. Thomson. This was aided by the vigorous parochial ideas of Chalmers in St. John's, Glasgow, and by his sermons which were published in 1817. The aggressiveness of Thomson in his publication quickened the rivalry of Moderate and Evangelical in 1819. It continued as a monthly until 1830.

A Catholic bookseller, George Keating, of London, began a periodical in July, 1815, entitled, Catholicon: or the Christian Philosopher: A Roman Catholic Magazine. It stated its main object as, "notices of Catholic and strictures on anti-Catholic publications." After 1818, it

continued as the Catholic Spectator, Selector, and Monitor, or Catholicon until 1824.

The English Congregationalists entered the journalistic field in 1818. Their publication was a monthly, the London Christian Instructor or the Congregational Magazine. In 1825 it became popularly known as the Congregational Magazine, a title which it retained throughout its life even though in 1846 its official name became the Biblical Review and the Congregational Magazine. Although it was faithfully supported by the denomination, it was not denominational in the sense that it was controlled by the Union Committee. It was the accredited organ of the Union, but the Union had no financial responsibility for it.[1] It lived until 1850. This was the first of two magazines by this same name. The second time that the name was used was in 1881 when the Christian's Penny Magazine and Friend of the People, which had begun in 1846, apparently merged into the Congregational Magazine.

When the Critic was discontinued in 1843 its place was taken by the Christian Remembrancer which had been founded as the Churchmen's Biblical, Ecclesiastical, and Literary Miscellany in 1819. In 1840 the Christian Remembrancer became a High Church quarterly, edited by William Scott (father of Clement Scott, the dramatic critic), and it became the champion of the Oxford Movement. The contributors included H. P. Liddon, John Duke Coleridge (afterwards Lord Chief Justice), and R. W. Church. It was intended that this publication should stimulate the clergy to take a deeper interest in theological learning. It was not intended to be a party organ although its promoters were High Churchmen. It often

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1 Albert Peel, These Hundred Years (A history of the Congregational Union of England and Wales 1831-1931), (London: Congregational Union of England and Wales, Memorial Hall, 1931), pp. 86 f.

found that its income was not sufficient to pay its contributors decently, if at all, and it ceased to be in 1868.

> The religious activity and the controversies which grew out of it in the decade before the accession of Victoria bore fruit in an increased number of periodicals. By the end of the reign the Religious Press had swollen to immense proportions, even apart from the considerable literature represented by the organs of the various societies, missionary and otherwise. The conditions which made for the growth of the Secular Press gave also the opportunity to the Religious.[1]

The beginning of the third decade of the century saw the beginnings of sustained religious newspapers, as distinct from magazines, reviews, and sporadic periodicals.

The year 1820 saw the birth of one of the first religious reviews, Blackfriars, a monthly magazine started by the Roman Catholics and continued to the present time.

The Record, which was published for the first time January 1, 1828, has been termed the "first definite religious newspaper."[2] It was the organ of the Clapham Sect. Its lengthy prospectus told of the extensive influence of the newspapers of its day; the writings of horrors and crimes and their effect. It went on to say that the instigators of the Record believed it their duty to establish a journal which would give the news of the day "unaffected by the disgusting and dangerous character of those baneful ingredients which circulate in intimate, though, certainly not inseparable, union with it."[3] In this vein, for many years, it appeared twice, and for a period even three times, a week. Politically it was independent, and as the recognized organ of the Evan-

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1 L. E. Elliott-Binns, op. cit., pp. 332 f.
2 H. W. Peet, op. cit.
3 Prospectus, Record

gelical party in the Church of England it soon acquired a position of enormous influence. The leading feature of its home policy was Church defence. It gave Church news with detail and fulness that was not found in the secular papers. Its special emphasis was missionary news and the concern for foreign missions. It was also important for its literary features and the contributions to it by many of the leading Churchmen were often reprinted in book form. "Its success was due to the editorial and controversial skill of Alexander Haldane; but the bitterness that marked it, though a common feature of the journalism of the times, was regrettable in a religious periodical."[1] Following the death of Haldane in 1882, the Record became a weekly and more moderate in tone.

The year 1828 also saw the start of the Spectator, which, under the editorship of R. H. Hulton, became an influence for good. Hulton, ex-editor of the unitarian Inquirer, coming under the influence of F. D. Maurice, left Unitarianism for orthodox Christianity and made the Spectator a means of affecting many people whom the pulpit could not reach.

The second quarter of the century with its atmosphere of religious and political controversies, saw a real expansion of the religious press.

> There was, in the first place, the rise within the Church itself of an alternative form of religion, starting from the Oxford Movement (1833-45) and issuing in Anglo-Catholicism. The Oxford Tracts were addressed to the clergy, and the Movement always appealed more to clergy and to women than to men, though great Anglo-Catholic laymen can, of course, be cited: for example, Gladstone and Salisbury; but Gladstone was notoriously an amalgam of incompatibles, and he retained to the last an Evangelical accent and therewith the support of the Nonconformist conscience.[2]

This was the period, not only of mental stimulus, but also of mechanical improvements within the entire journalistic world and the

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1 L. E. Elliott-Binns, loc. cit.

2 D. C. Somervell, The Victorian Age, Historical Association Pamphlet, (London: G. Bell and Sons, Ltd., 1937), No. 107, p. 19.

religious press did not fail to reap its share of the benefits. It is true that many periodicals were still in the scissors-and-paste stage,[1] but many were benefiting by such innovations as the Koenig steam-operated press and other "modernizations."

It was this period also that saw an increase in the deluge of pamphlets and pseudo-periodicals. Many were on the border, being neither "flesh nor fowl nor good red herring." A perfect specimen of this type, its like being multiplied a thousand-fold, was called The Popery Exposer: Being a Review of the correspondence between the Rev. Dr. James Kidd of the Church of Scotland, and the Rev. Charles Fraser of the Church of Rome, etc., together with animadversions upon other pamphlets recently published in favour of Popery. This was begun in 1830 "by a Minister of the Gospel." The first issue appeared on December 4, 1830, price 2d. Nine numbers were published, but even though it never intended to exist for long, to all intents and purposes it was a periodical.

The Catholic Magazine and Review, a monthly which began in 1831, was owned and operated by a group of clergy belonging, for the most part, to the Midland district. There were actually five editors, but a Mr. McDonnell was the acting editor. It was "the best conducted and most influential of Catholic periodicals."[2] In 1836 it became the Catholicon, but after five months it ceased publication in May, 1836.

In the Church of Scotland the Evangelical party was active and in 1832 it started the Scottish Guardian, thereby setting its seal of respectability upon the newspaper. The Guardian was at that time the

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1 The cutting out of appealing items from other journals and pasting them together to form a publication "edited" by the scissor-wielder.

2 F.C.H., Notes and Queries, "Catholic Periodicals," 3rd Series, Vol. XI, January 12, 1867, pp. 2 ff.

only representative organ of the Evangelical Party north of the Tweed. Its editor was the Rev. George Lewis, and the Rev. Robert Buchanan, the Disruption's future historian, was its leaderwriter. Primarily it was ecclesiastical in purpose and tone.

> It was, nevertheless, a product of the Reform Movement: first, in that it favoured the Bill; and secondly, in that it sought to harness current enthusiasms, by a steadier pressure than the monthly Edinburgh Christian Instructor /1817-30/ could exert, for the campaign to modify patronage.[1]

On the 7th of January, 1835, the Wesleyan Methodists launched out into the journalistic world once more with a weekly called the Watchman. It was started with the purpose of making profits for some public institution. The first issue which made a statement typical of the times, claimed:

> The principal aim of the journal will be to encourage that moral "preparation of the heart," which is so favourable to a right use of the understanding; and to place all public affairs in that same light in which alone the far less complicated and uncertain interests of private life can be fairly estimated - the clear and solemn light of eternity.[2]

Its religious tendencies grew less and less sectarian as the paper aged.

At the beginning of the Victorian Era there were no respectable periodicals within reach of the plain man's purse except Chambers's Edinburgh Journal (1832), diffusing useful knowledge at a low price, and Knight's Penny Magazine. A new class of reader appeared with the extension of the railways, and cheap magazines with illustrations and fiction began to flourish. The era of the popular periodicals had begun. Blackwood's and the great Edinburgh Review had made their place in the world and were still going strong. Their success stimulated imitators to pro-

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1 Cowan, op. cit., p. 40.
2 The Watchman, January 7, 1835.

duce publications more definitely religious in character. May, 1836, saw the first issue of the Dublin Review. The fame of the Edinburgh suggested a territorial title, and Dublin was chosen as a great Catholic centre, although from the beginning it was edited and published in London. It was the brain-child of the Rev. Dr. (afterwards Cardinal) Wiseman, Mr. Daniel O'Connell, and Mr. Quin.

The literary stimulus of the forties can be seen in the abundance of publications beginning to flow forth at this time. The Oxford Movement made this a period of marked literary activity, and many Tractarian converts appeared as contributors. Another major reason for this increase was the reduction of the Stamp Tax in 1836 from 4d to 1d. Among the flow was the Roman Catholic Tablet newspaper and review which began on May 16, 1840. It was a weekly founded by Mr. Frederick Lucas, a former Quaker. For the first ten years it was published in London but in January, 1850, it moved to Dublin. Frederick Lucas "became the pioneer of the Catholic newspaper press in England by publishing . . . the Tablet . . . realizing the enormous possibilities for good of the religious press when many were hopelessly blind to such considerations."[1] It had a stormy beginning because of frequent misunderstandings between Lucas and Messrs. Cox, the printers. During one such misunderstanding Messrs. Cox brought out the Tablet by themselves, edited by Quin, while Lucas continued his paper as the True Tablet. Reconciliations were made. Beginning as a sixpenny paper, the price was reduced, on the abolition of the newspaper stamp duty, to five pence. This price put it beyond the reach of thousands of Catholic workers.

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1 A. H. Atteridge, op. cit., p. 674.

> The Tablet presents its readers with a careful digest of the General News of the Week . . . . Its leading articles aim at conveying information no less than at advocating particular views or policies. A special feature has always been its reviews and literary notices of books, not merely of such as are in circulation among the educated classes in England. It gives as wide a latitude to correspondents as appears compatible with Catholic truth and charity.[1]

The Witness appeared on January 15, 1840, as the avowed organ of what became the Free Church party in Scotland. It was published in Edinburgh on Wednesdays and Saturdays, and had as its editor Hugh Miller, the geologist and lay champion of "Free Kirk" polemics,[2] who soon made it famous. In its first prospectus it calls itself the Old Whig. From its beginning it played a vital part in the Disruption of the Church of Scotland which took place three years later. Its first leader stated that it appeared, "when our Scottish contemporaries, with few exceptions, neither guide the opinions of their countrymen nor yet echo their sentiments."[3] He went on to state that the paper's purpose was to aid the cause of a "pure, efficient Christianity," such as had dignified the Covenanted Church. Miller's contributions to the paper approached literary perfection, while containing deep convictions and a wide range of original thought. After Miller's death in 1856, the Witness survived but a few years. It became a weekly in 1859, a tri-weekly in 1861, but it finally ceased publication in 1864.

The Jewish Chronicle, which has lasted to this day, was begun in this period in 1845. Although its circulation is limited by its scope and appeal, it too, demands classification among religious periodicals.

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1 An excerpt from an advertisement in The Dublin Review Advertiser, Dublin Review, July 1880. This does not appear in the bound volumes.

2 He is reputed to have invented the word "Free Church." See Cowan, op. cit., p. 244.

3 Witness, January 15, 1840.

Another religious weekly paper was the Nonconformist. It belonged to that group of periodicals which lie between Undenominational and Congregational publications. To this group of weekly journals, of which the Nonconformist was the forerunner, the Congregationalists had a limited connection during the following years. The group consisted of journals like,

> the Patriot, British Banner, British Standard, Nonconformist, Nonconformist and Independent, Independent and Nonconformist, Independent, Examiner, British Congregationalist, Christian World. There was the widest variety in the connexion of organized Congregationalism with these journals, both in regard to proprietorship and editorial. It was closest in the case of the Examiner and British Congregationalist.[1]

The Nonconformist appeared in 1841 with Edward Miall, M.P. for Rochdale, and later of Bradford, as its editor and publisher, who presented through its pages "the dissidence of Dissent and the protestantism of the Protestant religion." The journal protested vehemently against the disabilities which lay heavily upon Nonconformists in those days. The editor maintained that education, like religion, was no concern of the State.

> His labours in connection with that journal were so cordially appreciated, that when it was evident that the fall of Mr. Gladstone's first administration was merely a question of weeks, his admirers raised a sum of no less than 10,000 guineas which was presented to him at a luncheon at the Crystal Palace on the 18th of July, 1873. It will thus be evident that the paper with which Mr. Miall's name is associated is a representative one in no common degree, and that it may fairly be taken to speak the mind of that middle class, which according to some fervid orators is the backbone of the nation, and from which the great body of English Dissenters are drawn.[2]

But the Nonconformist always had to struggle for its existence, even in its prosperous days. Later Miall's younger brother, Charles E. Miall, became acting editor. Like many similar productions its thought and

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1 A. Peel, op. cit., p. 414.
2 "Religious Press," Dublin Review, July, 1881, p. 16.

outlook failed to keep up with the times, and in 1879 it was absorbed in the Independent, which began in 1867, and became the recognized organ of the Congregational body for several years.

The Unitarians were represented by the Inquirer which started its continuous existence in 1842.

The English Churchman and St. James' Chronicle, the organ of Evangelical Protestantism, dates from 1843. Its aim was to promote the advance of the spiritual religion, and to expose the tactics of the Ritualists. The paper voiced its dislike for the Ritualists, and yet it showed an equal distaste for the Low Church. In its early days the English Churchman (as it was and is known even now) was the organ of the old-fashioned High Church party, but near the end of the century it took an ultra-Protestant attitude toward all Church questions.

In 1843 the Quakers founded the Friend as a monthly. It became a weekly in 1892 and amalgamated with Edward Grubb's paper, the British Friend, in 1913. The Friend is not, nor ever was, an official organ of the Society, but was, and is, controlled by independent Trustees. One of its claims to uniqueness was that, for almost the first hundred years, until 1932, it had never been edited by a professional journalist. It was then that Hubert W. Peet took over as editor and made the paper self-supporting while almost doubling the circulation.[1]

For those who could not afford the reviews, there were other publications appearing after 1832 with a more popular price. In Scotland representatives of this group were the ecclesiastical Scottish

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1 See W. M. White, Quaker Biographies, Hubert W. Peet, (Friends Home Service Committee booklet) 1952, pp. 33 f.

Christian Herald (1836), the Edinburgh Christian Magazine (1849), and most noteworthy of all, the North British Review (1844). Speaking of these, Fleming in his history of the Church of Scotland (1843-1874) says,

> Passing over the purely ephemeral publications, official and non-official, that poured lavishly from the Church press, there has to be mentioned the appearance in 1844 of a new quarterly, the North British Review, that was the most notable literary fruit of the Disruption. From the beginning it was able to hold up its head without shame among its older competitors. This bold venture to claim and cultivate the wide provinces of science and literature in the interest of evangelical religion was a new thing at this time and prophetic of much to follow. Chalmers stood sponsor to the Review; Welsh was its first editor, and those who succeeded him - Maitland, Fraser, and Hanna continued to guide it along safely liberal lines, with a catholic list of contributors that came to include Sir David Brewster, Isaac Taylor, John Cairns, John Tulloch, and John Brown, M.D.. M'Phails Literary and Ecclesiastical Journal, which dates from 1846, may be said to have attempted a similar service for the Established Church, but with less completeness and success. It contained some clever writing, for most of which Robert Lee was responsible, but was marred by an acerbity of tone from which the North British Review remained singularly free. Norman Macleod was beginning to see great possibilities in providing a broadly Christian literature for the masses, and, in 1849, he undertook the editorship of the Edinburgh Christian Magazine, which deserves mention as a very humble precursor of Good Words.[1]

The Congregationalists desired a cheap denominational magazine, but there was no enthusiasm evidenced. Peel writes:

> It was agreed that a cheap magazine which would not injure other magazines, was desirable, but the Union had no capital, and could not risk a loss. It was decided however, that the Committee should endeavour to get funds and make a start, but in the autumn of 1843 it was announced that they had failed to obtain an editor, and so had not proceeded with the preparation of a specimen. It had been found that Dr. John Campbell, of Moorfields, who was already a contributor to the Patriot and the Eclectic Review, was prepared to become editor provided that the price should be threepence and the form octavo. This offer was gladly accepted, and in 1844 the Christian Witness saw the light.[2]

The monthly sale was over 30,000 and everyone was surprised, except

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1 J. R. Fleming, A History of the Church in Scotland 1843-1874, (Edinburgh: T. & T. Clark, 1927), p. 93.

2 A. Peel, op. cit., p. 126.

Campbell. He was certain that with the churches' full support he could fulfil a circulation of 100,000. It made a profit from the start, and in 1846 Campbell started a more popular monthly magazine of thirty-two pages. It was called the Christian's Penny Magazine and Friend of the People. The profits of both these magazines went into a fund for aged ministers called the "Christian Witness Fund." The Penny Magazine was to be an experiment for one year, the editor to receive no pay in case of failure. But this paper was also a success. Campbell edited both until 1864, at which time he calculated their combined circulations to be over 14,000,000 and making many thousands of pounds profit for the aged minister's fund. But neither of these monthlies dimmed his energies.

> He believed that the Dissenters needed both a daily and a weekly as well, and when Alderman Challis - chairman of the Patriot's managers, and afterwards Lord Mayor of London - wrote to him to say a new weekly would be established if he would edit it, and offered to supply his pulpit for twelve months if he agreed, finally closed with the offer, though he would accept no salary. The British Banner thus saw the light in 1848, its editor asking for a circulation of 100,000 as a counterblast to the Sunday Press - he said that one London Sunday paper had a circulation of 60,000.[1]

After twenty years of editorship, Campbell announced to the managers of the Christian Witness that he was resigning as editor of the Witness and the Penny Magazine. Both had ceased to be official organs of the Congregational Union in 1857 but continued in close connection with it until the Witness' end in 1871. The Penny Magazine lasted until 1881, when it was apparently merged with the Congregational Magazine, (which was the second periodical by that name), the journal of the amalgamated Church Aid and Home Missionary Society.

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1 Ibid, pp. 132 f.

"Dissatisfied with the theology and the politics of the Eclectic Review, Dr. Robert Vaughan started the British Quarterly Review in 1845, and it soon made a place for itself, and not merely among Independents and Dissenters, though the starting of it was much criticised and caused sharp division of opinion in the denomination generally . . . ."[1] After a long and distinguished career the British Quarterly ended in 1886. The Quarterly in its prosperous days sold 2,500 copies, but it was reduced to 500 copies before it died.

The Christian News, a weekly started in 1846, was one of a group of papers connected with the Evangelical Union of Scotland. Concerning Evangelicalism and its scope, the historian Somervell says:

> The Victorians did not discover Evangelicalism; they inherited it in the days of its zenith, and assisted in the first stages of its decline. Perhaps its zenith, the period in which it was still gaining more at the lower end than it was losing at the upper end of the social and intellectual scale may be placed in the 'forties and 'fifties, though it was as late as the 'seventies and 'eighties that three successive Lord Chancellors were regular teachers in Sunday Schools. If we are to look for its beginnings we must go back a hundred years to the Wesleys and Whitefield and their like resolutely bestirring the dry bones of Walpolian England. What most people think of as Victorianism is, in fact, Wesleyanism or Methodism come to its full fruition, one of the very few great movements of the modern mind that has confined itself almost entirely within Anglo-Saxon limits. This Evangelicalism overleapt all sectarian divisions of church and chapel.[2]

Its heyday filled the Early Victorian period, and from its depths many journals and periodicals sprang forth. In fact it was the periodical press that reaped the literary activity of this branch of Evangelicalism in Scotland. The Union's quarterly, the Evangelical Repository, lived for almost thirty years. The Forward, a monthly magazine, "for the promotion of a liberal evangelical theology and advancement of practical

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1 Ibid, p. 128.
2 D. C. Somervell, op. cit., p. 16.

Christianity," contained during its short career from 1867 onwards articles by such rising stars as Andrew M. Fairbairn, George Matheson, and William Robertson Nicoll.

The Guardian was founded on January 12, 1846, a few months after J. H. Newman joined the Church of Rome, by those remaining true to the English church. Its intention was to carry on the principles of the older Oxford Movement group, and to the end it maintained the High Church principles. Its promoters included W. E. Gladstone and Stafford Northcote. R. W. Church was the backbone of the paper, contributing a review and a supply of political articles every week from its beginning to the time he became Dean of St. Pauls in 1871. Even then he wrote for it from time to time until he died in 1890. It was the authoritative newspaper of the Church of England all during its existence, and its reports of Congresses and Convocations were regarded as official. Later it became known as the Guardian and Churchwoman, incorporating in it many things of interest to women.

On January 1, 1848, an attempt was made by the Roman church to publish a high class weekly review. The Rambler appeared as a "Weekly Magazine of Home and Foreign Literature, Politics, Science, and Art," but as its price was sixpence its public was limited. By the end of the first year it was changed to a monthly, and beginning in 1859, it was issued every two months. Later it became the Home and Foreign Review being published quarterly from July, 1862. Its views began to conflict with ecclesiastical authority, and once the faithful had been warned against it, there was little choice but to cease publication in 1864.

The Roman Catholic Tablet, at sixpence, was too expensive for

the great masses of Catholic workers. To supply these workers with a penny magazine, Mr. T. E. Bradley, on March 16, 1850, founded The Lamp: A Catholic Journal of Literature, Science, the Fine Arts, etc., devoted to the Religious, Moral, Physical and Domestic Improvement of the Industrious Classes. This became known as the Lamp. It supplied news, fiction, and Catholic wisdom, but financially it was far from successful. Bradley, for awhile, used his room in the debtor's prison in York as his editorial office. He was the pioneer of the popular Catholic Press. In 1871 the Lamp became the Illustrated Catholic Magazine, reverting to the Lamp in 1874. It was popular and prosperous for some years, ending in 1901.

The beginning of the second half of the century saw the rapid spread of the cheap press. The compulsory stamp duty on advertisements was abandoned in 1853. The stamp duty on news ended in 1855, and the paper duty ceased in 1861. This left the way open for the cheap press. The religious press was as quick as the secular press to take advantage of all these benefits. These coupled with the Elementary Education Act of 1870, which compelled all children to go to school, provided millions of new readers and the means to supply the growing demands.

In 1853, the London Quarterly Review began under Wesleyan auspices, and was edited by Dr. Rigg who was succeeded by W. L. Watkinson. Another quarterly review of this same year was the British and Foreign Evangelical Review, edited by Andrew Cameron, a Free Church minister of Scotland. His Review brought to the Scottish ministry a scope of theological knowledge which kept them in touch with the movements of religious thought in America and on the Continent. In the July issue of 1871 one of the contributors was Robertson Smith who wrote a digest and criticism of the main parts of German and Dutch theological periodicals. He also

wrote short notices of the more important theological books. This Review ended in 1878.

The Baptist Messenger which started in 1854, lived until the end of the century (1892). The Baptist Magazine was still in full swing when the Baptists started another church organ, a weekly, the Freeman, which was brought to life in 1855 by W. Heaton, a Baptist minister of Leeds. For many years the nominal editor was the Dr. Joseph Angus, Principal of Regent's Park College, His associate was the Rev. W. Howie Wylie who was also an active member of the staff of the Christian World. Wylie later founded and edited the Christian Leader in Glasgow. The Baptist Union took the control of the Freeman in 1899 and its name was changed to the Baptist Times and Freeman.

The Literary Churchman and Church Fortnightly in 1855 came out every alternate Friday, and was aimed at the moderate Anglican High Churchman. It dealt with religion and education, but became known for its full, scholarly, and accurate reviews.

New forces were at work, and one which became apparent most plainly in this period was the many undenominational magazines. There was the monthly Sunday Magazine (1864-1906) which had George Macdonald as a contributor. The Leisure Hour (1852) and the Sunday at Home (1854) were both published by the Religious Tract Society. These last two were representatives of a group which, while not officially issued by the Church of England, had its hearty support. Here, too, should be mentioned the Quiver which began in 1861, just seven years after Sunday at Home. This class of "family reading" was welcomed into many homes.

A short-lived but interesting type of publication was the Penny Pulpit which was issued from October, 1856, to March, 1857. It claimed

to be "A collection of accurately-reported Sermons by the most eminent Ministers of various denominations."

John Campbell, in his editorship of the British Banner, ran into difficulties with the Congregational Union over the "Rivulet" Controversy; he sought his independence from denominational control by resigning from the Banner and starting the British Standard in 1857. The Banner soon languished and died while the Standard was self-supporting until his retirement in 1866.[1]

In 1857, the Rev. Jonathan Whittemore founded the Christian World as "an undenominational and progressive religious weekly." Its beginning was slow, but in 1860 James Clarke became its proprietor and editor. He was a very remarkable journalist; a born editor, described by Robertson Nicoll as the greatest and most influential of Nonconformist journalists. As soon as the paper tax was repealed, he reduced the Christian World's price to a penny, which immediately increased circulation. Clarke was the first religious journalist to make use of the telegraph and the cable. He made a coup when he installed a rotary printing press as soon as it was invented, using this highly accelerated printing method to get the late news on press nights in the Christian World, even after his rivals had printed their papers.

> By rare ability, energy, and courage he made his penny weekly paper the popular organ of English Free Churchmen, who then laboured under bitter grievances and disabilities. Mr. Clarke enlisted gifted writers like Peter Bayne and William Howie Wylie, men with liberal sympathies and a broad outlook. For many years the Christian World wielded remarkable influence as a pioneer of progress both in politics and in theology. At one time it reached a circulation of something like 120,000.[2]

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1 A. Peel, op. cit., p. 134.

2 T. H. Darlow, William Robertson Nicoll, (London: Hodder and Stoughton, 1925), p. 59.

"The appearance of the serials of Emma Jane Worboise in the pages of the Christian World did much to overcome Nonconformist prejudice against fiction."[1] The paper has continued up to the present day.

The Revival, another undenominational paper, started in 1859, and continued until 1870 when it became the Christian, the recognized organ of the undenominational Evangelical interest.

> Theologically this had much in common with the "Open Brethren." It gave prominence to evangelistic movements, and might be described as the organ of everyone who preaches in a tent. During D. L. Moody's first visit to England the circulation of the Christian more than doubled through its reports of his remarkable revival meetings.[2]

It is maintaining itself even today.

Andrew Cameron, who began the British and Foreign Evangelical Review in 1853, left that quarterly to start the Family Treasury in 1859. It became a real rival to Good Words. The Family Treasury had more of the religious element while still maintaining its literary quality. It was in its early volumes that Mrs. Charles's Chronicles of the Schönberg-Cotta Family was written, after which she continued as a contributor.

One phase of the religious press which must be mentioned is that of the parish magazine. Invented by Canon Erskine Clarke in 1859, it took the form of a central inset, which was supplied commercially or by the denominational offices, local matter being included.[3] The repeal of the paper duty saw such a rapid increase in these papers that "in 1936 the total monthly circulation reached the very high figure of 2,700,000."[4] This influence must not be overlooked, ". . . for they penetrate into humble homes in town and country alike, and are often read 'from cover

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1 L. E. Elliott-Binns, op. cit., p. 334.
2 Darlow, op. cit., pp. 59 f.
3 J. M. Swift, The Parish Magazine, q.v.
4 Alan Webster, "Parish Magazines," Theology, July, 1943, Vol.XLVI, no. 277, p. 156.

to cover.' In days when cheap literature was not so common as it is to-day they were a real boon; and even to-day their usefulness still remains."[1] From these magazines alone one may gather some idea of the vast part played by the press in ecclesiastical affairs.

Amid the galaxy of well-written and well-edited periodicals, there is a star every now and then which shines forth with such brilliance and freshness that it demands attention. Just such a star shone forth in the beginning of the sixth decade of the nineteenth century. It flashed like a meteor across the journalistic sky of Great Britain. It was Good Words, which began in 1849 as the Edinburgh Christian Magazine, but in 1860 changed its name, and with Norman Macleod as its editor, it became an entirely new monthly. In his hands it became a high-class literary magazine on broadly religious lines.

> Good Words . . . was really the first successful attempt to seal an alliance between good literature and healthy-minded piety. Alexander Strahan, its publisher, was led to Scotland for an editor in the person of Norman Macleod, ... In him large-hearted Christian sympathies were combined with a true knowledge of the changing temper of the time. From the first he sought to cultivate a wide range of topics, not confining himself to articles of a directly religious character, while he maintained a uniformly high tone of treatment. So he was able to enlist many of the best writers of the day, introducing poetry by George MacDonald, Alexander Smith, Jean Ingelow; fiction by Anthony Trollope, the author of John Halifax, and himself; expositions of science by Brewster, J. D. Forbes, Geikie, and Herschl; drawing largely from divines of the broad-school - Caird, Llewllyn Davies, Kingsley, Stanley, Tulloch - but also welcoming to his pages Free Churchmen like Guthrie, Arnot, and Walter C. Smith, as well as representatives of English Nonconformity. But such a varied and attractive programme suggested a new standard of "Sunday reading," and was therefore viewed with alarm in stricter circles. The Free Presbytery of Strathbogie overtured the Assembly of 1863 in vain "to take Good Words into its consideration." A London Presbyterian minister contributed to the Record (then the very narrow organ of Anglican Evangelicanism) a series of articles on "Good Words: the Theology of its Editor and Some of its Contributors,"

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1 L. E. Elliott-Binns, op. cit., pp. 333 f.

> in which it was accused of "doing about as dangerous a work as any journal of the present day." But such criticism brought ridicule upon itself, and the circulation went up to 110,000 monthly.[1]

In 1904 it was taken over by the Harmsworth Press where it was "condemned first to degradation, and then to a sentence of death."[2]

Among the penny newspapers, which followed in the wake of the abolition of the various taxes on newspapers and the cheaper processes of production, was the London Universe. This was the first Roman Catholic penny paper in England with any permanent success. It started on December 8, 1860, with Mr. Dunn as editor. It was to be non-political, but even with the editor and staff donating their services the paper could not make ends meet. Political articles were introduced to increase circulation, but this led to the majority of the staff resigning. The printer, Mr. Lane, took charge of the paper, supporting the Liberals and the Irish national cause. The paper made certain to include a priest as the "theological editor." Later it coalesced with the Catholic Weekly, reverting to its original policy of giving Catholic news without politics.

The Church Review was started in 1861 by a small group of High Churchmen calling themselves the English Church Union. Their purpose as stated in the first monthly issue, was not to supply news, but "to provide those who have neither the time nor the means for a search into original sources with a repertory of arguments, ready for use, in defence of the Catholic Faith as the English Church has received it from the beginning."[3] Thus it became the first paper published as an exponent

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1 J. R. Fleming, op. cit., pp. 156 f.
2 Ibid, p. 265.
3 Church Review, January, 1861.

of the Catholic Revival which had taken place under Pusey, Keble, Newman and others in 1833. In 1862 it became a weekly, changed and assembled to fulfil the conditions of a Church Newspaper. This was contrary to its original purpose of excluding news, but times change, and in 1863 it severed connections with the English Church Union. Later the Church News became amalgamated with the Review and their names were incorporated as the Church Review and Church News.

Also in 1861, the Methodist Recorder began, becoming the official organ of the Wesleyan Conference. Unlike the majority of denominational journals the Recorder concentrated its views on the work of the denomination it represented, giving its own (Methodist) news in great detail, and sticking to its aim of "presenting, from week to week, a complete body of Wesleyan intelligence." It is still an influential paper.

The Presbyterian's Weekly Review, born in the spring of 1862, and edited by Peter Bayne, in London, presented a moderately Liberal position in politics and a tone broader than usually found, at this time, in Presbyterianism.

Another review, a quarterly, founded in 1858, the Christian Ambassador, became the Primitive Methodist Quarterly Review in 1879.

The Anglo-Catholic point of view in the Anglican church has been fostered since 1869 by the Church Times. Up to this time the Church of England had been represented only by the more expensive papers, but this supplied the demand for a cheap newspaper. It was started by G. J. Palmer, who at first was editor and owner until ill-health ended his activity in the former capacity. He brought to his readers, to quote the first article in the first issue, "the principles of the Church Catholic, as interpreted by the Church of England, and enunciated in no faint accents in the Book of Common Prayer." Elliott-Binns says of it,

> It may be taken as the high-water mark of Anglican journalism which for some reason or other has never really been able to rival that of Nonconformity or to attain to circulations which bear any real comparison with papers such as the British Weekly.[1]

An illustrated magazine, the Month, devoted to fiction and light literature was founded for the Roman Catholics in 1864 by Miss Taylor. The Jesuits took over the magazine when she founded a community of nuns. The new editor was the Rev. Henry J. Coleridge under whose guidance it became a high class review. Among its able contributors was J. H. Newman whose "Dream of Gerontius" first made its appearance among its pages.

To this era also belongs the widely read Baptist periodical, the Sword and the Trowel. It was founded by the prominent Baptist minister, the Rev. C. H. Spurgeon, who edited its first issue in 1865.

The Contemporary Review appeared in 1866, during the first month of the year under the editoship of T. Knowles. Its aim and spirit was distinctly Christian. Dean Alford wrote the prospectus. In 1876 Knowles resigned because of a disagreement with the owners, and started the Nineteenth Century in 1877.

In 1867, Signs of Our Times, an independent, illustrated weekly, started its ascendency. Under the editorship of the Rev. Michael Baxter, who was much concerned with the interpretation of Biblical prophecies and the Second Advent, it drew a great following. In 1876 its name was changed to the Christian Herald, under which title it has steadily grown.

The Rock, formed in 1868 by Dr. Begg of Newington, bears mention at this point because of its type. "For violence and aggression towards those who differed from it The Record was, if possible, excelled by the Rock, which did not spare even trusted Evangelical leaders like Ryle and

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1 Elliott-Binns, op. cit., p. 333.

Hoare."[1] A representative of the Anglican press, the Rock's aim was to support the Protestant character of what was then the United Church in England and Ireland. Its opening address stated that it intended "to wage a warfare of reason and fact and argument against the principles and practices of Ritualism, and against the dangers and delusions of that Rationalism which seeks to set the intellect of man above his soul, and does violence to human reason by its misapplication." It went on to tell how this would be accomplished. But in the same address there is a statement: "A Christian Church was planted in England either by Paul himself, or by one of the Apostles, before Paul went to Rome; and, as a fact, England was in no way indebted to Rome for her Christianity." It died a natural death at the turn of the century.

In 1870, a paper called the Northern Press was nearing extinction, when Father James Nugent of Liverpool took it over.

> /This/ remarkable man . . . renamed it "The Catholic Times" and gradually made it the most widely circulated Catholic paper in England. Printed for many years by the boys of the refuge he had founded in Liverpool, when it became a profit-earning paper it helped support this work of charity. Offices were opened in Manchester and London. A special London edition was produced in 1878 a Christmas supplement issued under the title of "The Catholic Fireside" was so successful that it was continued as a monthly penny magazine; in 1893 it was made a weekly publication . . . . Mr. P. L. Beazley, the present /1914/ editor, has directed it for 27 years and is now the dean of Catholic journalism.[2]

In the thirty years before the end of the century competition became extremely keen. It was not only the age of the "New Journalism," but it was also an era of guerilla journalism. Enormous sums were necessary to float a paper, and sometimes too great concessions were made to

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1 Ibid, p. 332.
2 A. H. Atteridge, op. cit., p. 674.

the plebeian tastes in order to make a profit, but more often than not these inferior publications were the first to fail. Great papers did arise during this period and stay, e.g. the British Weekly, and many that had been established grew up with the times. They utilized the new methods and adapting themselves to the change, either increased in stature, or at least held their own.[1] But many real gems, papers of the "family" type, for example, which the public was sorry to see disappear were crowded out.

Examples of such "gems" would differ with each historian, but specific examples are easily found. The Christian Age was founded by John Lobb, later a member of the London School Board. He started it in 1871, and by regularly printing sermons, or sometimes just a précis, of T. DeWitt Talmadge, then a forceful American preacher, it attracted a considerable following. Not least of its attractions were its religious articles, news of the British and American churches, its sketches and stories. The Christian Globe, of the "family" type, began in 1874. This was a weekly, not fully attached to any denomination, which gave religious news of all the churches.

Church Bells, with the Rev. J. Erskine Clark, Vicar of Battersea, as editor, came into existence in 1871. Through its editor it emphasized the theology of the High, Broad School. It was an illustrated weekly, "considered by many as quite a model of what a Church paper should be."[2] It contained engravings, Church news, reviews, essays on phases of Christianity, and comments on the Church's view of current topics.

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1 See above, passim.
2 _____, About Newspapers, p. 141.

R. W. Dale was the first editor of the monthly Congregationalist, which was established in 1872 with the intention of defending and upholding the principles of the Independents. The Congregationalist had begun where the Christian Witness had left off. J. G. Rogers succeeded Dale as editor, but the magazine could never meet its financial obligations and finally disappeared in 1886. In the following year Rogers became editor of the new Congregational Review, a monthly, which in turn had succeeded the British Quarterly.

In 1873, an up-to-the-minute weekly journal, edited by Mr. G. A. Hutchinson, and owned by Mr. Eliot Stock, commenced as the Baptist. Hutchinson was an experienced editor, who, under the sponsorship of the Religious Tract Society, had begun and edited the Boy's Own Paper. For fourteen years he guided the Baptist, after which Mr. T. H. Stockwell became the editor. In 1910 it was absorbed into the Baptist Times and Freeman.

In 1874, Dr. J. B. Paton founded the Christian Signal, a penny weekly journal which was intended to rival the Christian World on more orthodox lines. It lasted only a few months.

The Keswick Convention Movement started a monthly organ in 1874 called the Christian's Pathway of Power, which must have been an unsatisfactory title, as the name was changed in 1879 to Life of Faith, and continued as a weekly under the Rev. Evan Hopkins' editorship.

The Church Quarterly Review, one of the more substantial of the Anglican periodicals, was first issued in July of 1875, under the guidance of Charles Knight Wilson, its first editor. It contained reviews and essays on theological and Church topics, along with the usual material found in reviews. Its stand was High Church orthodoxy, and in its youth

it was opposed to Biblical criticism.

> The Church Quarterly Review exists to promote Church doctrine, Church life and Church opinion, not only in the Church of England, but in the Anglican Communion everywhere, and it includes articles on Ecclesiastical affairs in Scotland, Ireland, India, the Colonies, and the United States.[1]

The Expositor, a monthly theological magazine, was founded in 1875 by Messrs. Hodder and Stoughton. It was first edited by Dr. Samuel Cox, but in 1885 the editorship was given to Robertson Nicoll who continued in control until his death in 1923.

In 1876, the Church of England Pulpit was brought out by the Church of England because of the prevalent thought that the public wanted to read sermons of the better type. The "public" included the sick, the bed-ridden, colonists and travellers unable to hear sermons. The paper published sermons from men of all beliefs maintaining an independent view in its leaders, reviews, essays and correspondence. Along with the two or three sermons each week, the news of important Church intelligence and the above items, there was a large place given to the ancient and modern laws of health in order to instil holiness in its readers and future generations, because of its belief that the health and purity of the human body was the greatest factor in promoting morality in all peoples.

Life and Work was a new departure in 1879, by the Church of Scotland. This was the revised name given to the Church's official Record. The venture transformed a dull organ into a popular monthly.

In 1880, the famous organ of the Salvation Army, the War Cry, was founded by General Booth. This always has been, and still is, the least expensive of all the religious periodical publications.

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1 _____, About Newspapers, p. 148.

Monthly magazines had been published by the Church of Ireland before this time, but in 1880 a paper of more frequent publication seemed to be demanded. To meet the need, a weekly, the Irish Ecclesiastical Gazette began in that year. It was a literary as well as a church paper, containing reviews and other items both ecclesiastical and secular. As the recognized organ of the Irish Church, it upheld its political views and maintained its interests.

Several newcomers which entered the religious field of journalism in the 'eighties bear special mention. The Christian Commonwealth, begun in 1881, and the Christian Million, which started in 1883, were weeklies of the more or less undenominational type. The former was the organ of the progressive movement in religion and social ethics, and championed the "New Theology."

In 1881, the Anglican Communion employed a scheme which was rather popular in that era. It was that of publishing a weekly under one name, and then at the end of each month publishing the same material as a monthly under an entirely different name. Hence, the Church Standard, an illustrated weekly journal and review, began in 1881, along with the illustrated Hand and Heart, "a Family Social and Temperance Journal," which was simply the Church Standard issued monthly.

A notable weekly arose in 1882, the Christian Leader, which the Rev. W. Howie Wylie managed. Wylie was a Baptist minister with no mean literary talents. It was through him that the readers of the Leader were introduced to S. R. Crockett's earliest and most popular works. Also through these pages Alexander Whyte's St. George's discourses first received their journalistic popularity.

January of 1884 saw the Contemporary Pulpit projected and edited by Robertson Nicoll for a London firm of publishers. It was a monthly homiletic magazine which failed to survive the passing of the century. It died in 1894.

A portent of the future was the journalistic alliances formed around the Irish Tribune which began in 1884.

> A remarkable development . . . is that directed by Mr. Charles Diamond, for some time a member of the Irish Parliamentary party, who started (1884) "The Irish Tribune" in Newcastle-on-Tyne. Shortly after, he purchased two other Catholic papers, the Glasgow "Observer" and the Preston "Catholic News," which were in difficulties for want of capital. He then formed the idea of working several papers from a common centre, much of the matter being common to all, but each appearing under a local title and having several columns of special matter of local interest. He now issues "The Catholic Herald" /1911/ from London, as the centre of the organization, and thirty-two other local weekly papers in various towns of England, Wales, and Scotland. He also produces on the same system ten different parish magazines and "The Catholic Home Journal," with which the old "Lamp" has been amalgamated.[1]

The Methodist world created a new journalistic venture in the domain of the religious press in 1885. This was the Methodist Times begun by Hugh Price Hughes as the organ of the Forward Movement. "It was remarkable for its wide intellectual outlook and for what in those days was an unusual interest in social problems."[2] For its day this was a new departure and defined more clearly the trend being taken by the more successful religious periodicals. It set the pace for the trend in many ways. It was well illustrated, and specialized in reporting all the news - mostly Methodist - in a light, but rather attractive way. It devoted an entire page to children, and featured articles of particular interest to women and their work. Also, for the group of its readers who

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1 Atteridge, op. cit. p.675.
2 Elliott-Binns, op. cit., p. 336.

were interested in self-education and improvement, there was a secion called the "Study Circle." When the Methodist Churches united in 1932, this paper absorbed the Primitive Methodist Leader, begun in 1868.

In 1886, the British Weekly began its climb to fame. Little need be said here about it, inasmuch as it and its first editor are the subjects and main theme of this work. However, a review by one of the few students of religious journalism - the late Hubert W. Peet - might be in order.

> The outstanding event in the religious Press in the 80's was the first issue of the British Weekly (1886). With this "Journal of Christian and Social Progress" Sir William Robertson Nicoll struck a new note, and created a paper which was a power not only in Nonconformist circles, to which it primarily but by no means exclusively appealed, but one that was an authority on literary matters and an asset to the Liberal Party.[1]

In a class by itself is the Expository Times, which was founded in Aberdeen, in 1889, by Dr. James Hastings, the editor of many eponymic dictionaries and encyclopedias. Very shortly after this monthly began it was transferred to an Edinburgh publishing house where it continues to be published.[2] It attempted to provide the clergy and the ministers of all denominations throughout the world with complete information on all the up-to-date developments of thought and erudition in intelligible form. It also contained homiletic and expository articles and reviews. It continues under the editorship of Dr. Hasting's son and daughter.

Scholarship and criticism were the keynote of the end of the century. Many reviews and learned journals appeared, attempting to satisfy a need, but few succeeded in surviving more than a few years. The Religious Review of Reviews lived from 1890 to 1896. "Reviews" and "Quar-

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1 Peet, op. cit.

2 For a fuller description of its history see, "Expository Times," /Jubilee/ Expository Times, October, 1939.

terlies" abounded. The Critical Review attempted to make a place for itself, especially in the Free Church, as a quarterly of advanced scholarship. It existed from 1891 to 1893.

In a lighter vein was the weekly Church Family Newspaper. It began in February, 1894, as the "moderate churchman's family newspaper." This followed the general trend of the times, aiming to be not only interesting but educative in the popular sense, as compared with its Anglican contemporaries. It changed its name to the Church of England Newspaper, but it had always upheld the comprehensiveness of the Church of England. From its inception it contained general news notes, items of topical interest, and, of course, weekly church news.

It was in 1899 that D. C. Lathbury, a distinguished journalist, who was the editor of the Guardian, left that paper and founded the weekly, Pilot.

As one century ended and a new one began, many religious periodicals died. Of those extinguished, the Anglican press lost the weeklies, the Rock and the Pilot. Of the popular family-type magazines, the Christian Globe, the Christian Age, the Christian Commonwealth and the Christian Leader were a few that ceased publication. Many more of the religious press became casualties of the First World War, and after the Second World War not more than two dozen or so survived.

The new century did see new periodicals come into the religious field, however, and some were well worthy of the effort made to print them. Of those which rose prior to the First World War the following demand notice.

The monthly United Presbyterian Magazine became the Union Magazine in 1900. The Independent became the Examiner in the same year and was the

new organ of the Congregationalists. In fact it was published by a group, the "Congregational Publishing Company." This was the group that had bought the Independent, and changed its name. After a few years of struggle the name was changed once again to the British Congregationalist in 1906.

In 1907 the United Methodist began as a Free Church paper; and 1908 saw the beginning of the London Catholic which dispensed Irish and Roman Catholic news in London and the provinces.

The United Free Church Record began in 1912 under the experienced guidance of W. P. Livingstone, who, after serving the press in London, went to Edinburgh to edit the Record, "/W/hich/he speedily made . . . one of the best Church magazines in Britain."[1] Later it joined with the Church of Scotland publication (after the consummation of the Union in 1929) and continued as Life and Work: The Record of the Church of Scotland.

Quarterlies were still in vogue, some steadily carrying on, some changing their names, while new ones sprang up. The Holborn Review, the Methodist quarterly which appeared in 1910, was simply the new name for the Primitive Methodist Quarterly Review, which in its turn had been called the Christian Ambassador before 1879. Some of the quarterlies which appeared at the beginning of the new century were: Modern Churchman in 1911, the Anglo-Catholic Movement's Green Quarterly in 1924, and the Congregationalist's Congregational Quarterly in 1923. But all of the quarterlies and reviews are a study in themselves and no summary treatment can do more than mention them. It is hoped that in time they will find their way into a history of their own. Similarly the great

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1 Fleming, op. cit., p. 268.

legion of missionary "Records," "Reviews" and like publications should be treated as a separate history.

This must suffice as a record of religious journalism with some of its outstanding features during the 19th century. It is like the "grain of mustard seed, which, when it is sown, is less than all the seeds that be in the earth: But when it is sown, it groweth up and becometh greater than all herbs, and shooteth out great branches; so that the fowls of the air may lodge under the shadow of it."[1]

The "tree" has grown from sturdy roots, waxed strong, and sent out many branches. Its influence must now be traced.

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1 Mark 4: 31, 32, (Authorized Version).

CHAPTER II

Religious Journalism in the Nineteenth Century: Power and Influence

The newspaper is practically a new thing in view of the long history of Britain, and religious journalism is just half as old as London's first newspaper. But its growth has been rapid, and as it grew it exerted a definite power and influence. Evidence of this power and influence is scattered but by no means rare. A parliamentarian in the time of Prime Minister Walpole stated "The sentiments of one of these scribblers have more weight with the multitude than the opinion of the best politician in the kingdom."[1] As religious journalism grew and became more distinctive its influence became of a different type. Its power never overshadowed that of the lay press but it was no less distinctive. Thomas Carlyle, in 1831, commented on the growing power.

> There is no Church, sayest thou? The voice of Prophecy has gone dumb? This is even what I dispute; but in any case, hast thou not still Preaching enough? A Preaching Friar settles himself in every village: and builds a pulpit, which he calls Newspaper. Therefrom he preaches what most momentous doctrine is in him: and dost not thou listen and believe?"[2]

We find this carried one step further by the historian Saintsbury, "Perhaps there is no single feature of the English literary history of the nineteenth century, not even the enormous popularisation and multiplication of the novel, which is so distinctive and characteristic as the development in it of periodical literature."[3]

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1 Quoted in Robbins, The Press, (London: Ernest Benn, Ltd.), p.58.
2 Quoted by R. Garnett, The Reign of Queen Victoria, London. Vol. II, p. 509.
3 G. Saintsbury, History of Nineteenth Century Literature, 1780-1895, (London: Macmillan and Co., 1896), p. 166.

The growth of this power was not surprising nor was the churches' use of the press an innovation. The relationship between the press and the pulpit has been many-sided and the historical forms an interesting and important part. Almost from its invention the art of printing had been confined at first to the uses of the Church of Rome. For nearly two hundred years the press was restricted to the cloister. But in Britain, about the commencement of the sixteenth century, men began to avail themselves of their privileges, by avowing sentiments which in Germany and the Low Countries had been expressed at great peril. Even here, however, at a much later period, bold as the apostles were, the press had a precarious existence. Generally speaking, the printed sheets of information, the pamphlets of news, which later became newspapers, came in with the Stuarts and began by being devoted to sermons and King's speeches, without any attempt at news. Then from these pamphlets of news evolved the weekly paper devoted solely to the circulation of news, and from the general newspaper arose the paper concerned more specifically with things ecclesiastical.

Though the last quarter of the eighteenth century saw a very great development of the mere newspaper, there was not much actual development of religious journalism. The largest growth is in the nineteenth century and it is there, consequently, that is found the evidences of the greatest power and influence. This power and influence was hindered at first by many burdensome duties, e.g. on advertisements and paper, not to mention the stamp duty; but still there was power. A newsman of 1824 said, "It /the periodical Press of Great Britain/ is the most powerful moral machine in the world, and exercises a greater influence over the manners and opinions of civilized society than the united eloquence of the bar, the senate

and the pulpit."[1] The writer went on to say that, like the steam engine, the press was but in its infancy, because those advantages which it was capable of conferring on the human race were so hampered by duties, that they appeared to be designed, principally, for future generations. Yet forces were at work endeavouring to release the press from these hampering duties. An enthusiastic address was written to Thomas Spring Rice urging total repeal of the taxes on knowledge because "The Press is now the National Pulpit."[2]

The circulations were small because of the expense of each paper incurred through the taxes, but this seemed to be of minor consequence in the first half of the nineteenth century.

> A newspaper was read, not glanced through, was regarded as a sober observer of fact, not a vehicle for vivid sketches, startling stories, and hasty generalizations, subject to the control of a single man, as fallible as another. Its audience was few but fit, and its influence consequently great. A newspaper's power is not a matter of mechanical multiplication, and it cannot be judged by the rotations of a machine. Equally little can it be gauged by calculations of net sales, for its influence-scale does not automatically go up or down, like its advertisement charge, with the rise or fall of the distribution thermometer. The power of the individual newspaper is primarily a matter of established reputation for honesty of purpose, sobriety of statement, and truthful aim; . . . .[3]

Unfortunately there were not many papers which measured up to this standard but those that did made a lasting impression. "The power of the Press, in its true sense, rests on character and not on circulation, and that influence is often lessened by the greater area over which it is spread."[4] Fortunately many made such an imprint on the mind of the historian that something of their story remains to this day, while the memory of period-

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1 _____, Periodical Press of Great Britain and Ireland, (London: Hurst, Robinson and Co., 1824), p. 1.

2 See, A Student-at-Law, The Fourth Estate: or the Moral Influence of the Press, London, 1839.

3 Robbins, op. cit., p. 77.

4 Ibid.

icals of lesser stature have faded almost completely from view.

Although it was the second half of the nineteenth century which presented the most advantageous circumstances in the history of the religious press, the first half of the last century was not devoid of notable examples. Among these was the Record, which bravely challenged the authority of the Bishop of London in his own diocese, and forced him to yield. "It is impossible for the present generation to realize the immense and often malignant power exercised by the religious press in the first part of the last century."[1] The Record's words were looked upon as an oracle by those wishing to call themselves "religious." It maintained its own circulation, its own influence, even its own power by denouncing any who did not submit to its views. "At one time when one of its accusing articles was published, the Standard, the Morning Advertiser, the Morning Herald, and John Bull - not infrequently the Morning Post - copied them verbatim, and the article was assumed to throw quite a halo round the page on which it was written."[2] In 1853, the Record attacked Bishop Wilberforce so violently that the Bishop wrote a letter to the editor; "There is indeed a day coming when to have lived by stirring up strife between Christians will be no better a profession than to have lived upon the wages of prostitution."[3] The Record also severely attacked F. W. Robertson of Brighton as well as F. D. Maurice. This attack on F. D. Maurice led to his dismissal from his chair at King's College, London, in 1853. Even as late as 1860 there was no clear evidence of the shrinking of the power of the Record.

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1 Elliott-Binns, Religion in Victorian England, p. 333.
2 F. Maurice, Life of F.D. Maurice, (London: Macmillan and Co., 1884), Vol. II, p. 362.
3 Quoted in Elliott-Binns, op. cit.

This is the more surprising when it is realised what type of format the papers took in that period. Speeches were reported verbatim taking from four to six columns of absolutely solid print. There was no attempt to aid the reader by paragraphs or headings. The closely printed pages which included these long verbatim polemical speeches and leaders were so closely printed and so cramped that one writer claimed that these early nineteenth century papers looked "like a disease on paper."[1] This was also a period of strict anonymity of all articles, which gave them a certain weight and power, but it was a power which was sometimes greatly abused. In this era also the liberty of the press was restricted. This liberty was of slow growth. The duty on advertisements was abolished in 1853, the duty was abandoned on newspapers in 1855, the duty on paper in 1861, and the optional duty on newspapers in 1870. So it is from that time that the British press may be said to date its complete freedom.

The old style of newspaper began to change. The liberty of the press did much to help it shake off its old form. The way opened for a cheap press, and within ten years of the abolition of the paper duty penny papers had become a common thing. Other factors were also at work, factors which were destined to change the whole form and process of journalism to which religious journalism was so closely allied. Among these factors were: the cheapening of paper, with the introduction of wood pulp and the perfecting of machinery used in manufacturing it, keen competition, improved machinery in printing offices, and the growth of advertisements. Among the greatest of these were the improvements in

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1 B. Ifor Evans, "Rise of Modern Journalism," Fortnightly Review, February, 1930. Another writer said that most of the papers of this period looked "as though an easy chair were supplied with each." Stutterheim, Press in England, p. 75.

the printing press, the advent of the Fourdrinier papermaking machine, and the transition from woodcuts to process engraving. Many of these factors had been developing all during the nineteenth century. It was really the never-ceasing competition for the largest circulations that led to the marvellous improvements in printing. In 1814, history had been made by the introduction of the steam printing press, on which newspapers could be printed at the rate of 1,100 copies an hour. The editor of one religious journal said of this development, "The mechanical improvement effected towards the close of the eighteenth century increased the constituency of the Press from thousands to millions, and what had hitherto been a vast potentiality became almost at once (it was first seen clearly in the United States of North America) an immense power."[1]

The history of journalism in the nineteenth century was also the history of the rapid growth of a reading public. At the beginning of that century the newspapers sought to cater for a select public, but by the end of the century the various periodicals were for the most part competing to secure the largest and least critical public. The majority of the early papers appealed mainly to man, the political animal; the popular papers of the later part of the century appealed to the whole family, men, women, boys and girls. With this gradual widening of appeal there came a lessening of the worst asperities and bitterness of journalistic writing. This growth in the reading public is also attributed to the fact that the vast majority of people were learning to read. In 1870 compulsory education was introduced, with the result that a generation of readers appeared

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1 Nicoll and Seccombe, Bookman Illustrated History of English Literature, (London: Hodder and Stoughton, 1906), Vol. I, p. 239.

who had no traditions and little real education, but possessed a great desire to know and as unlimited capacity of absorption. This reading ability, gained by so many of the working class who did not have either the leisure or the aptitude to take the time or effort to read the old-style papers, which they found boring, created a demand for a new type of reading matter. Hours of work were long and reading had to be a relaxation. What they demanded was a brief intelligible story in a form which was entertaining as well as instructive. It was only natural that, when sales of the old-style papers began to drop, an effort was made to regain readers by revising the style and technique without losing any of its power or influence. It was only natural too that those papers which failed to make the adjustment lost everything, their power, their influence, their very existence. The new British reading public required a new press, and the old press required a new impulse, both of which were at hand in the latter half of the nineteenth century.

The conditions which made the secular press grow, also gave opportunity to the religious. This transformation in the press world is best described in the last number of the Witness [1871] in which the editor said,

> The Christian Witness (and the remark applies to other periodicals of its class) has had to contend for a long time with two difficulties. First: in its more general object as a medium of religious instruction, it has had rivals which came into existence long after itself, but which have been able to create and command attractions altogether beyond its reach. At this moment the streets of London, and we presume of other places, are placarded with immense bills announcing a single tale in a religious magazine, at a cost, it must be of many hundreds if not thousands of pounds. Competition with enterprise and speculation of this sort is impossible on the part of such a magazine as ours has been.[1]

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1 Quoted in Peel, These Hundred Years, p. 253.

So it was that within the last thirty years of the nineteenth century the whole character of English journalism had been changed.

This change actually started in the secular press in 1865 with the publishing of the Pall Mall Gazette with W. T. Stead as its editor. In this paper the "New Journalism," so called by Matthew Arnold, made its most dramatic development, introducing a new note into the whole of British journalism.

> The modern impulse, culminating in England in the last decade of the 19th century in what was then called the "New Journalism," was a direct product of American conditions and way of life, but in Great Britain it was also the result of the democratic movement produced by the Education Act of 1870 and the Reform Act of 1885; and it affected more or less all countries which came within the influence of free institutions.[1]

W. T. Stead was the prophet of this new journalism, and through the Pall Mall Gazette he introduced it to the rest of Great Britain. For a year or two it stood alone, but the usual result followed. A successful newspaper or publication of any kind is not allowed to stand alone very long without a competitor or a rival. As one writer commented, "Columbus had shown how the egg could be made to stand on its end; and everyone could make it stand on end afterwards."[2] So it happened, as it always does when a really new development takes place, that new regiments raised themselves to carry out the new tactics, as it were, spontaneously. This new journalism succeeded in capturing a vast uncultured public through efficiency. "'We know we write for the meanest intelligence,' Mr. Kennedy Jones once said to Lord Morley. It was a recognition of the gibe that the new journalism was written by office boys for

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1 H. Chisholm, "Newspapers," Encyclopedia Britannica, 11th ed., Vol. 19, p. 547.

2 Pebody, English Journalism, (London: Cassell, Petter, Galpin and Co., 1882), p. 174.

office boys."[1] But one of the great contributions which the new journalism made to journalistic history was that it brought with it mechanical efficiency and a successful method of attack on outdated procedures.

Another development of this period was the increased dependence of newspapers upon advertisements. Advertisers were not philanthropists. They required value for their money, and the papers were eager not to offend them. Of course, when a paper had a very large circulation, the tables were turned, but such instances were rare. Another development was the illustration of papers. Up to the last decade of the nineteenth century journalistic illustrations were in the hands of the artists, and the artists were in the hands of the wood engravers, who reproduced their work sometimes effectively, but more often inefficiently. It was as late as 1890 that the application of photography to illustrated journalism began in Britain, and within twenty years it had grown to enormous proportions.

So it was that the last quarter of the last century saw the greatest advancements in the press world of the nineteenth century, and since religious journalism was so closely allied to these improvements this period has become known as the halcyon days of religious journalism. The years just previous to this time were not devoid of examples of the power and influence of the religious press. One great English newspaper once claimed that it, "discharged in the modern world the functions of the mediaeval Church."[2] R. W. Church is said to have virtually shaped the policy of the Church of England through the midst of many crises by simply writing a review and a political article each week for the Guardian.

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1 B. Ifor Evans, op. cit.

2 James Bryce, Studies in Contemporary Biography, (London: Macmillan and Co., 1903), p. 380.

Lord Shaftesbury wrote in 1868,

> It is curious and instructive to observe what a prodigious effect newspapers and magazines, but newspapers more especially, have produced on the social and political condition of England already . . . . They have diffused an amount of knowledge . . . that never would have been effected in any other way . . . . Hence a mass of information is acquired, alike abundant and superficial.[1]

Examples could be multiplied, but new periodicals were meeting the new demands with the new techniques, and attention should be centred on these. It is instructive to note some of those religious journals which met the new demands by making allowances for the new conditions and, because of the change in press tactics, became influential and powerful. Those that refused to change died a quick death, while even some that did change died. There were, however, many that arose to great heights because they supplied a real need to a great new reading public.

The one item of a paper which made it a power was the leader. It was the leader which represented the considered judgment of the newspaper and which had gradually built up that very considerable social and political weapon known as the power of the press. The use of the leading article as it is known today was begun not much before the beginning of the nineteenth century.[2] The idea found quick approval. The morning newspapers developed the leading article into a work of art, which often rivalled the best speeches in Parliament in argument, eloquence and wit, and attracted as much attention as the Parliamentary

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1 Quoted in Elliott-Binns, op. cit., p. 330.

2 One writer claims, "The finest specimens of periodical political argument on both sides ever known in English journalism are to be found in the rival London prints of the time of the Popish Plot and the Exclusion Bill, from 1678 to 1683. If only for the fact that they invented and fixed for a full two centuries the names of Whig and Tory on the two great parties in the State, these earliest leading articles should always be remembered." Robbins, The Press, p. 33. These claims are not shared by many other historians.

reports themselves. "The Times knowing how to appropriate one by one all the specialities of its contemporaries, and to improve upon what it appropriates, was one of the first newspapers to adopt the idea of the leading articles . . . ."[1] But the religious papers adopted the idea and it was through these leaders that the power of the religious press was exerted. In fact some had as many as four leaders often filling three or four columns, in one issue. One of these was the Witness, in which from 1841, the editor, Hugh Miller, and his coadjutors maintained a high standard of polemical prose. Other examples were legion but the methods were changing. These leading articles, which expressed the attitude of the paper towards the important subjects of the day, changed their style and form as the paper itself followed the trends. In the papers of the latter half of the nineteenth century, which appealed more by their short news paragraphs and their readableness, the whole raison d'être of the older type of leading articles which appealed to the less casual and more serious public, had disappeared. The leading article was a form of newspaper routine, to some extent, but a routine which had proved its value by experience. It was through these leaders that the editor "spoke" to his readers. It was what he wrote that made him either a great influence or just another editor. Thus it is safe to say that the great editors were great leader writers and their names became important in direct proportion to the influence which their leaders wielded.

Throughout the nineteenth century these great leader-writing editors of religious journals stood out. In the Nonconformist ranks alone there were such men as Isaiah Conder, the founder of Nonconfor-

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1 Pebody, op. cit., p. 95.

mist journalism, who edited the Eclectic Review and the Patriot. There was Edward Miall and Dr. John Campbell. The latter was the editor of the Christian Witness, the Christian's Penny Magazine, and the British Standard, who had filled a very prominent position and wielded great power in religious journalism. Dr. Robert Vaughan, editor of the British Quarterly, was a robust type of Nonconformist journalist. The British Quarterly, under his direction, had rendered eminent service to English Nonconformity. These men were great religious journalists; they were the pioneers. They worked under the handicap of the taxed press, poor circulation methods and comparatively small numbers of readers. Had they lived in the latter part of the nineteenth century, in the age of the great mechanical improvements and of the vast reading public, it is difficult to surmise what stature they might have attained. But their own day was fortunate to have had them since otherwise the improvements in the methods and means of religious journalism might have been more delayed. Nevertheless, they were great journalists.

> The great journalist is he who makes the paper with which he is connected a success; and in days of competition the elements necessary for obtaining and keeping a hold on the public are so diverse, and the factors bearing on the financial success, the business side, of the paper are so many, that the organization of victory frequently depends on other considerations than those of its intrinsic literary excellence or sagacity of opinion, even if it cannot be wholly independent of these.[1]

In the late Victorian days there arose a band of journalists, in the midst of advantages never before known in the journalistic world, who made their own reputation and consolidated their influence at the same time as they built up the prestige of a single journal. Among

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1 H. Chisholm, "Newspapers," Encyclopedia Britannica, 11th ed., Vol. 19, p. 545.

such names were those of Mr. Frank Harris of the Saturday Review, Mr. Strachey of the Spectator, Mr. Maxse of the National Review and Mr. J. L. Garvin of the Observer. All of these men, each in his different way, made a reputation and created an influential journal at one and the same time. Each had his distinctive public andmessage and each uttered it in his distinctive style, and with such clearness did they stamp their personalities on their journals that it was almost impossible to imagine these journals healthily existing after their retirement or death.

In the world of religious journalism there were similar outstanding examples. One editor of this late Victorian period stood out above all the other editors of religious journals. He not only entered the field when religious journalism was in its most glorious phase but he was wise enough and clever enough to use all the new methods and improvements, the new ways and means, mechanical and otherwise, to the very best advantage. He had had a religious background and training coupled with a flair for journalism which when activated by a keen mind and an uncanny knowledge of human nature made him a great journalist. He made his name by his British Weekly commentary on religion, ethics and literature. This editor, William Robertson Nicoll, because he epitomises all the attributes of the outstanding journalists, and because his paper, the British Weekly, is the summation of all that had evolved in the journalistic world throughout the nineteenth century, becomes an ideal example of the religious editor, and his paper an outstanding sample of religious journalism in the last century, which to all intents and purposes ended with the 1914-18 war.

He and his paper are a study in themselves.

Nicoll was deeply interested in literature and religion and succeeded in communicating his interest to thousands of readers whose minds would have been the poorer and the darker but for him. It is fair to say that he was a leader of literary taste rather than one who provided the material for critical judgments, and his great merit is that he recognised and met the need for influencing the taste of the enormous reading public who came into existence under the new stimulus of education. That which Dixon Scott, the brilliant journalist, wrote in 1913, remained true to the end.

> In the British Weekly . . . Nicoll addresses an audience far more numerous, far more responsive, more eagerly in earnest, than that controlled by any other living critic. He praises a book - and instantly it is popular. He dismisses one, gently - and it dies. He controls the contents of the bookshelves of a thousand homes - they change beneath his fingers like bright keyboards - and every alteration means the modification of a mind. What Claudius Clear reads on Wednesday, half Scotland and much of England will be reading before the end of the week. So that it is plainly a matter of high importance, as well as of immense interest, to consider the quality of this influence, the secrets of this power.[1]

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1 Dixon Scott, Men of Letters, (London: Hodder and Stoughton, 1916), pp. 206 f.

CHAPTER III

The Making of a Religious Journalist

The rugged Highland country of Aberdeenshire, Scotland, has produced more than its share of notable men.[1] The north has been known for its passion for learning, Aberdeenshire claiming to have "more brains to the square mile than any other northern county." It is in this county, where the ancestors of William Robertson Nicoll had lived for many generations, that the search must be made for the influences and the background which moulded his life. He himself said, "How true it is that we do not alter much! The externals change and the surroundings, but in our inmost souls we are what those early years and teachers made us."[2]

W. R. N.'s family tree had firm Celtic roots; paternally it was a branch of the Macleod of Lewis clan, and maternally of the Robertsons of Struan, to which branch also belonged F. W. Robertson, the great preacher of Brighton. The great-grandfather of the Rev. Harry Nicoll, minister of Auchindoir, father of Sir William Robertson Nicoll, is listed as one of the Jacobites of Aberdeenshire who were "out in the Forty-Five."[3]

The early background of Robertson Nicoll lies in Aberdeenshire during the 19th century. His father, Harry Nicoll, was born in this district in 1812, "within a mile of the house in which he died, [in Lumsden] and between these two houses, with little change, his life of nearly eighty years was lived. How he came to be what he was remains a

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1 For a long list of eminent scholars and journalists from this section see: T.H. Darlow, William Robertson Nicoll, p. 5n and p. 11.

2 Quoted by his wife, C.R. Nicoll, Under the Bay Tree, p. 152.

3 Alistar and Henrietta Taylor, Jacobites of Aberdeenshire & Banffshire in the Forty-Five, (Aberdeen: Milne & Hutchison, 1928), p. 439.

mystery."[1] He was the son of a small farmer, who cared little for books, but by a very frugal existence and no little hardship he succeeded in graduating as Master of Arts from Aberdeen. It was this passion for learning, common in the north, which motivated the rest of his life. Although he himself had not inherited it, its continuation can be traced in the very warp and woof of his son's life. In 1834, Harry Nicoll became, by appointment, the schoolmaster of his native parish of Auchindoir, of which Lumsden is the centre. "His heart was set on the ministry, and he pursued his theological studies until he obtained licence to preach."[2]

During the Disruption in 1843, the Rev. Harry Nicoll's evangelicalism led him to take the Free Church side, thus depriving himself of his position with the parish schools which remained with the Church of Scotland. In his whole presbytery, that of Alford, he was the only one of all the schoolmasters and ministers to "come out."[3] This led to his becoming the first Free Church minister of Auchindoir, a position which he held until his death in 1891. In the village of Lumsden, a church was built for him along with a nearby manse - known today as the "Old Manse."[4] It was here that he lived, married, reared his children, and died.

> It will be observed that all the honour he ever received was from his own people. He dwelt among them all his life, and was schoolmaster and minister in their midst for two generations. He loved them and the parish. During his ministry he was not absent a week a year on an average from his own home.[5]

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1 W.R. Nicoll, My Father: An Aberdeenshire Minister, 1812-1891, (London: Hodder & Stoughton, 1908), p. 5.
2 Ibid, p. 14.
3 Ibid, p. 16.
4 W.R.N. bought this house for his father when he retired, later enlarging it. After his father's death, he spent many summer holidays here with his wife and children (C.R. Nicoll, op. cit., p. 29) and it is in this house that Lady Robertson Nicoll now lives.
5 W.R. Nicoll, op. cit., p. 17.

It was to this home that the Rev. Harry Nicoll drove his young bride in 1850. He had married Miss Jane Robertson, the twenty-three year old niece and adopted daughter of the Rev. William Robertson of Aboyne. W.R.N. says of his mother,

> My mother was a bright, warm-hearted, eager girl, exceedingly well educated for her time. Though she was sixteen years younger than her husband, the marriage was a perfect union. It was clouded early by her falling into consumption. This seemed even to strengthen the tie between husband and wife. From the first she was associated with my father in his studies . . . . My father was in the habit of reading to her for hours every day. In spite of all that could be done my mother grew steadily weaker, and died eight years after her marriage leaving four children, three of whom have now followed her.[1]

The mother's death was a severe blow to the father. He never married again and seldom spoke of her except on the occasion of anything of great importance, when even to the very last, he would say to the children, "I wish your mother had been here."[2]

Next to his family, the Rev. Harry Nicoll's greatest love was for books. It amounted to a true bibliomaniac's passion. These books, which formed the huge library in the Manse, were an influential factor in the background of the son. William Robertson Nicoll inherited his delight in books. An inveterate bookworm, he had an insatiable thirst for books and the knowledge contained therein. "At fourteen, he knew the writings of Johnson, Addison, Steele, and Goldsmith better than he knows them today."[3] How the elder Nicoll first developed his passion for collecting and reading, the son said was never discovered. The father was habitually reticent about his own experiences. All his life he shrank from publicity, and at one time went so far as to state the wish that his grave should go

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1 Ibid, p. 19.
2 Ibid.
3 Jane T. Stoddart, W. Robertson Nicoll, (London: S.W. Partridge and Co., 1903), p. 41.

unmarked. Another curious fact is that the father had not the least literary ambition. His sole ambition was to know. This combination, the son said, made him different from almost every other person he had encountered.

> If my father had been asked why he devoted so much time to books he would undoubtedly have answered that he did so in order to qualify himself for his duties as a minister. He had the utmost belief in a learned ministry, and especially in a ministry conversant with the original Scriptures.[1]

As one bleak winter followed another the manse library grew. Being a teetotaller and practically a vegetarian he was able to amass books even though he was paid a very meagre salary.[2] For at least forty years a weekly parcel of books arrived from an Aberdeen bookseller, and very rarely were any volumes returned. About this library the son wrote,

> If one had been asked any time during the last thirty years of my father's life, which ended in 1891, where the best library and the best bookman in Scotland were to be found, I think if he had known the truth he would have referred the inquirer to my father's home. . . . You would find a little manse with some 17,000 volumes gathered under its roof.[3]

Few of the books he bought were new, because they were too expensive, but since his needs were few and because he was not married for the first half of his life, "every farthing that could be spared till then went to the purchase of books."[4] After his wife's death "he seemed to comfort himself by an increased devotion to study and reading."[5] In a lecture, given to the villagers near the end of his life, the Rev. Harry Nicoll told how he preferred walking to using the omnibus even for distances as far as eight miles (from the village to the railway station), because by

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1 W.R. Nicoll, op. cit., p. 85.
2 "His income never reached £200 a year." Stoddart, op. cit., p. 10.
3 W.R. Nicoll, op. cit., pp 3 f.
4 Ibid, p. 8.
5 Ibid, p. 20.

doing so he could save enough to buy two books costing one shilling and sixpence each.[1]

It was into this world of books that William Robertson Nicoll was born, in the village of Lumsden, Aberdeenshire, on Friday, the 10th of October, 1851. He was the eldest of five children, two girls and three boys, all of whom he outlived. Although from birth he was in the midst of books, it was the particular latitude in which he lived that early taught him what warm companions books could be on bitterly cold nights. In the biography of James Macdonell, Nicoll wrote from experience when he described the country round about Rhynie, which is only four miles from his own home in Lumsden.

> This country is well known to me, and looking back, it is the winter that strikes me as the dominant influence of the region. It was very long and very rigorous. The country-side was famous for its snowstorms, the huge "drifts" they left behind them often impeding traffic for days. It was impossible to work out of doors during the dark and roaring nights and the scarcely brighter days. People were thus thrown upon their own resources, and were either made or marred by their use of the winter.[2]

Nicoll claimed that one of the most vivid of his early recollections was reading at the other side of a little table from his father. A naphtha lamp afforded light as each carefully read the page before him, "while outside the strath lay locked in snow, and the winds were piling up the drifts. At nine precisely each night we separated and went to bed, and hardly ever without a smile or a laugh."[3] The wise father never influenced the boy's choice of books, but he was quite willing to recommend a book when asked. "He was particularly pleased

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1 Ibid, p. 100.
2 W. R. Nicoll, James Macdonell, Journalist, (London: Hodder & Stoughton, 1890), p. 17.
3 W.R. Nicoll, My Father, p. 38.

if we read the books he had just finished, as this gave him an opportunity of talking them over."[1] The whole scope of literature was at his elbow - a well though-out library. It was above all a theologian's collection, with much on orthodox divinity and church history, but along with the Greek and Latin classics there were represented all of the categories of literature. Jane Stoddart[2] lists his favourite childhood books as The Arabian Nights, Frankenstein, and Don Quixote.

> At an early age he had read many standard English authors. He knew the novels of Scott, Bulwer Lytton and Disraeli, also the masterpieces of American literature, the works of Emerson, Longfellow, Lowell and Bryant. He read eagerly the volumes of Bohn's Library, Knight's Shilling Series, and Chambers's publications. The library was rich in eighteenth century literature . . . . Controversial theology attracted him.[3]

But the writers most influential on Nicoll's boyhood were Gilfillan, Emerson and the Brontës.

The influence of the newspapers and magazines received into the home must not be overlooked for they were not only read by the children of the manse, but often imitated in manuscript newspapers edited by the children. But it was the father who first instilled within the son the zest for knowledge.

Religion and the Church played a most important part as educational influences on the lives of the children of this stern and solitary region. "It was inevitable that much of the most earnest thinking of the most earnest minds in such a place should be on religious and ecclesiastical subjects . . . ."[4] As the father was a minister, it was quite natural that this religious training should be emphasized in the Nicoll

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1 Ibid, p. 92.
2 Nicoll's assistant for thirty years, who wrote his biography while he was still living.
3 Stoddart, op. cit., p. 21.
4 Nicoll, James Macdonell, p. 18.

household. The burden fell upon the father of the motherless children about whom Nicoll said,

> We knew that he was profoundly religious - that religion with him was first and last. We learned our psalms and chapters, and went to church and Sunday-school. But my father never spoke directly to any of us about religion. On Sunday we sat in a room where there were none but books concerning religion. Among them, however, were sceptical books side by side with the others.[1]

Sunday after Sunday, as the children listened to their father preach, some impressions were bound to be made. "His sermons were clear, able, and deeply reverent expositions of evangelical theology. The main subject of his teaching was the Holy Spirit."[2] The elder Nicoll kept in touch with the times as is evidenced in the journals he left behind him. The controversies of the moment were frequently discussed at the meetings of the Presbytery, to which the father often took his son. Young William later wrote of how he would sit quietly in a corner while the learned men of the district discussed things ecclesiastical. Among the scholars that met there were the father of Robertson Smith, A. S. Fullerton of Strathdon (Lord Kelvin's first prizeman and star pupil), and the father of that great missionary, Mackay of Uganda.

"Already it was understood that the boy would enter the ministry. No other profession was ever talked of between father and son."[3] Young Nicoll received his earliest education at the Free Church School of Lumsden, but soon outgrowing this he entered the parish school of Auchindoir. It was the parish school which W.R.N. in later writings, called "first among intellectual influences" of his day.[4] So at the age of eight, in the year of his mother's death, he became a scholar under the

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1 Nicoll, My Father, p. 91.
2 Ibid, p. 88.
3 Stoddart, op. cit., p. 18.
4 Nicoll, James Macdonell, p. 17.

tutorship of Mr. John Wilson, the schoolmaster at Auchindoir. This scholarly teacher, who later was awarded the LL.D. degree and the Rectorship of Banff Academy, was one of the potters who helped to mould the tender clay of Nicoll's youth. Nicoll wrote about him many years later, and admitted that even though he had an acrimonious tongue and an uneven temper, he was a born teacher, and pitilessly just.

> Mr. Wilson did us a rare service in bringing to our minds at that early and susceptible age a sense of the beauty and the glory of literature. It was he who taught me that Homer and Virgil were poets to be read and enjoyed. Moreover he set us to think for ourselves, and he criticized what we were reading. . . . He was one of those who awaken the soul, and to whom old pupils look back with gratitude, all the more because he did not try to force his own opinions upon them.[1]

Besides Latin and Greek, mathematics was also a specialty of the parish schools. The masters taught well; they were scholars, and were eager to see their pupils attain the university. A boy might remain at these schools until he was fourteen or fifteen and then go to the Grammar School in Aberdeen, for a year, for the finishing touches before competing for a bursary.[2] Nicoll related that,

> By the admirable Bursary system a link was provided in Aberdeenshire between the parish schools and the university, by which proficient scholars, however humble their circumstances, could secure a college training. For five shillings a quarter, or less, the parish teacher would give his best energies to instructing a promising lad in classics, more especially in Latin prose composition. The boy could go to Aberdeen in October and compete with some two hundred and fifty of his fellows for perhaps thirty bursaries or scholarships, ranging in value from £30 to £10, or even less, and tenable for four years. As the college season in Aberdeen lasted only five months, and the fees were not exorbitant, a strictly frugal bursar, aided by supplies of oatmeal and butter from home, was able to pay his way.[3]

The father's intention was for young William to spend a full year

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1 British Weekly, November 29, 1900.

2 The Bursary Competitions are described fully in, N.N. Maclean, Life at a Northern University, Quatercentenary edition, 1906, Chapts. I to III.

3 Nicoll, James Macdonell, p. 18.

in the Grammar School before going on to the university. But as often happened, boys straight from the parish schools would compete for these bursaries and win them without the Grammar School's backing. The elder son of the Reverend H. Nicoll entered the Aberdeen Grammar School in April, 1866, took his examination in the October, 1866, competition, and without the help of the customary year at the Grammar School won a coveted bursary which allowed him to enter the university in November, 1866, at the tender age of fourteen, a year sooner than usual.[1] He was elated at having won a competition against older and wiser scholars - in the point of school years attained.

It was Aberdeen, with its University and Free Church College, that left its ineffaceable mark upon young Robertson Nicoll. In his mind, as long as he lived, no other university could measure up to it.

Pictures of the University life, in their reality, are scarce, and those available differ with the writer's own bias. It seems that no graduate ever describes his "old school" without a bit of sentimental attachment.[2] Nicoll, himself, told how it was a time of hard work and frugal living.

> The whole atmosphere was one of hard, steady labour. Most of the men were aware that they were having their one chance in life, and if they threw it away they never could repair the loss. The great majority worked. Very few indulged in sports of any kind. I never remember hearing of any among my fellow students who was distinguished as an athlete.[3]

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1 Nicoll looking back remembering how young and immature he was to be entering a university wrote, "I entirely agree that we went too soon to college. We were too young to have a fair chance. The first two years I hardly understood what was going on. It was only in the third session that my mind woke. If I had been a couple of years older it would have been quite different and in every way better." From a letter to Rev. W. McRobbie, December 5, 1908, quoted in Darlow, op. cit., p. 14.

2 Detailed accounts are given in Dr. Walter Smith's Borland Hall, and in George Macdonald's Alec Forbes, and in Bruces' Reminiscences.

3 W.R. Nicoll, "The Country Student of Forty Years Ago," Alma Mater, (the Aberdeen University Review) quatercentenary number, September, 1906.

Nicoll won practically no prizes or honours during his student life because of his assiduity to extra-curricular studies especially in English literature. He had the reputation of being a very wide reader, and he was a great frequenter of the Library and the Mechanics' Institute.

It was a four year course of study with the classical languages as the basis. The required subjects for the first year consisted of two hours each day of both Latin and Greek, with three hours a week devoted to English. This was all in conformity with the concepts of that day concerning the qualifications of a learned person. Nicoll said, "My father firmly believed that no one was educated who was not a classical scholar - that there could be no sound education except on the basis of Greek and Latin . . . . He was never out of the Greek Testament, and possessed at his death about a hundred different editions."[1] The second year courses included each day an hour of Natural History, two hours of Mathematics, with Latin and Greek each reduced to one hour. In the third year the major emphasis was on Natural Philosophy and Logic, each comprising eight hours of study a week, plus Mathematics which required a daily hour of study. During the last year, the scholars devoted eight hours a week to Moral Philosophy, and one hour a day each to Natural Philosophy and Chemistry.[2]

The courses of study and the "outside" reading seem to have had more influence upon the student Nicoll than the University professors themselves. Nicoll wrote reminiscences of two of his professors in a light and amusing book called, Aurora Borealis Academica: Aberdeen

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1 Nicoll, My Father, p. 34.

2 Notes on the Evolution of the Arts Curriculum in the Universities of Aberdeen, 1908, pp. 13 ff.

University Appreciations, 1860-1889, published in 1899, in which he told of classrooms that alternated between boredom and bedlam.

Nicoll's church life was not neglected during his university days. His landlady had a pew in the Original Seceders church and during his first years he attended there. While he was in Aberdeen many eminent preachers were to be heard and Nicoll, along with the rest of the students, took advantage of their presence.

In March of 1870, Nicoll graduated M.A. from the University and entered the Free Church College of Aberdeen, in the latter part of October of the same year. There were about thirty students enrolled in the Free Church College. In the entrance examinations Nicoll placed second, which entitled him to a very good bursary.

Nicoll's mind was maturing. It was at the College that he began fully to appreciate his professors. "Our professors were men of marked and notable individuality, men who left and impress of themselves on every student."[1] The professors with whom he came in contact were for the most part really great men.

Principal Lumsden seems to have had the greatest influence.

> His lectures, in which Calvinistic theology was expounded with remarkable learning and force, had no winning grace of style, and he never attempted to conciliate the spirit of the age. In stern, rugged sentences he would reiterate the most unpopular opinions, but his Calvinism was made beautiful by his devout and tender faith, and his New Testament lectures profoundly influenced the thought and lives of his students.[2]

Later Nicoll wrote comments on this professor comparing him with another of his professors, Dr. Robertson Smith, who in 1870, at the age of

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1 W.R.N., quoted by Stoddart, op. cit., p. 31.
2 Stoddart, op. cit., p. 32.

twenty-four, was appointed to the Chair of Hebrew and Old Testament Criticism in the Free Church College.

> They often differed in points of opinion. I remember at one and the same time we had Robertson Smith arguing in his class room that the Angel of the Covenant was not Christ, while the Principal was taking the opposite side upstairs. . . . His /Robertson Smith/ favourite theologian and expositor was Calvin, who was always quoted when any difficulty arose. But for the other theologians then in favour in Scotland he had scant respect. He was always an ardent Free Churchman, and used in his prayer every morning to bring in the petition, "Bless the Church of our fathers - the Free Church of Scotland!" He was then extremely young, younger than many of his students, but being by nature frank, accessible, communicative and affectionate, he was regarded with general good will, though I think few of us valued him as we should have done.[1]

With the help of the good bursary, journalistic writings, and a few teaching engagements which he had secured, Nicoll earned about a hundred pounds a year. During his entire four years at the Free Church College, he wrote a weekly column of general notes and reviews for the Aberdeen Journal. He also had some contributions accepted by the British and Foreign Evangelical Review, the Dundee Advertiser, the Scotsman, the Literary World, the People's Friend, the Banffshire Journal, and Once a Week.

During these days he showed a deep interest in theology and philosophy. He was awarded the £60 Lumsden Scholarship for New Testament Theology, and in 1871 he won a prize, one of several that he was awarded, for an essay on the ethics of Spinoza entitled, "Control of the Will over the Emotions."

In Nicoll's third year at the Free Church College in 1872, when he was twenty-one, he was "licensed" to preach by the Presbytery of Alford, of which his father was Clerk. In the following spring, on

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1 Quoted in Glasgow Evening News, January 5, 1901.

May 12, he preached his first sermon in the mission hall of Kinnoir, in the vicinity of Huntly. But the first time that he preached in a church was in the autumn of the same year; this was at the Free Church of Braemar, his sermon being, "God behind Christ" using as his text, Psalm 110:1.[1]

Nicoll completed his fourth and final year of theological training in April, 1874, winning a scholarship of £40 as reward for finishing second in the College exit examination. During the summer of this year he went to Rayne, a small farming community about fifteen miles northeast of Lumsden, to serve as "probationer" at the Free Church there. It was there that the great influence of Spurgeon impinged upon his life in the form of a complete set of the great man's sermons. He read them all.

Scotland had been roused during this period by the Moody and Sankey evangelistic meetings, and Nicoll found that the community of Rayne was responding to this awakening of religious earnestness.

> During the six months which Nicoll spent at Rayne he found spiritual interest strangely quickened all through the countryside. The scattered population gathered eagerly to special evangelistic services, while enduring results were produced in numbers of human lives. The glow and ardour of these experiences left a permanent impress on Nicoll himself. In seasons of low spiritual temperature Christian theology always tends to become formal, frigid, scholastic; whereas it unfolds its hidden meaning and reveals its burning reality whenever souls catch fire.[2]

That summer the young preacher received calls from the congregations of both Rhynie, near Lumsden, and Dufftown, about twenty miles further on. He chose Dufftown, and settled there in November of 1874. On the 18th day of the same month he was ordained, his father giving the ordination address. Concerning the manse and Church Nicoll said,

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1 Darlow, op. cit., p. 27.
2 Ibid, p. 28.

> My house was a substantial and comfortable building, and having saved £200 by teaching, writing, and a scholarship, I was able to furnish a few rooms decently without running into debt. . . . My church was of the old-fashioned kind, without any architectural pretensions, but it had inestimable acoustic qualities, and every one in the audience could hear a whisper.[1]

Dufftown was the tempus mirabilis of Nicoll's life. He vividly described his life there in his article "My First House: the Absolution of the Snow."

> I lived alone in my home, save for the housekeeper. During the stormy part of the year I was practically a prisoner. However much one might have wished to do this or that outside, the way was blocked. One had the absolution of the snow for any failure to discharge pastoral duties. In this manner I had a day extending from eight in the morning till twelve at night when I could practically do exactly as I liked.
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> I was barely twenty-three at that time, and I found that I had accepted much on the testimony of men I looked up to. It grew clearer and clearer to me that it would be wise to test my creed - religious, literary, and political. I resolved that some hours of every day - the last hours - should be spent in serious grappling with great books. Accordingly I set out on this path. My beginning was with the Ethics of Spinoza. On that subject I had gained a college prize, but I knew that I had completely failed to grasp the significance of Spinoza's system. There followed a long, sustained, and deliberate attempt to understand what Pantheism really implies, and in particular, whether it allows any place to the validity of moral distinctions. Without claiming for one moment to have solved the problem, I may say with some confidence that the mental discipline was useful, and it made me read everything about Pantheism that I could buy or borrow. Then came Calvin's Institutes. We were taught Calvinism in the Divinity College, but few attempted to read the great divine in his own works. He was not half so fascinating as Spinoza, and yet a long and serious effort to understand the great system which Calvin built up cannot fail to leave an indelible trace on the mind. I had also bought the Commentaries of Bishop Lightfoot, so far as they were then published, and I read those with most minute care over and over again making innumerable notes. The books that occupied me during these winters very soon gave me great pleasure so that I looked forward to my evening wrestle with the masters as the happiest time of the day. Sometimes I grew so excited that I could not get to sleep for an hour or two. Another book may be mentioned, Mansel's Limits of Religious Thought, a book that roused Maurice and Hulton to passionate indignation. But it convinced me at the time; and I am inclined to think, with great deference, that Mansel was most seriously misunderstood, and that he was essentially a defender and not a destroyer of the

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1 Claudius Clear, "My First House: the Absolution of the Snow," British Weekly, May 20, 1915.

> faith. Then in a sale at Dufftown I secured Beaumont and Fletcher in eight volumes for a mere song, and read through the plays with the greatest care. I am fully persuaded that my self-education in the Dufftown manse, amidst the absolving snow, had an immense influence over me, which continues to this day.[1]

Nicoll's journalistic output was still considerable. He continued his weekly contributions to the Aberdeen Journal, and also wrote reviews for the British and Foreign Evangelical Review and the Academy. He sent some of his poems which were accepted, to the Scotsman, and for his old friend Professor Minto, editor of the Examiner, he wrote frequent articles for inclusion in his paper. Besides all this he tried to be appointed the Scottish correspondent for the Christian World but, "the Christian World would not take a Scotch letter on the ground that Scotch people were so clannish that they would not read the paper, and English people didn't care."[2] He wrote a pamphlet, that became widely circulated, called "Reasons for Belonging to the Free Church." Besides all this, Nicoll managed to write a series of evangelistic addresses for the Christian, which were later published in book form under the title Calls to Christ.[3]

All of this mental self-improvement did not deter Nicoll from carrying out his parish duties, and being an active member of the School Board during his three years in Dufftown. He had a Bible class of more than 100 people, including young folk from other churches in the town, and before leaving, his Church membership had increased to over 200 communicants.[4]

While he was there, he turned down an offer to become the minis-

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1 Ibid.
2 Nicoll. Quoted in Darlow, op. cit., p. 34.
3 W.R. Nicoll, Calls to Christ, (London: Morgan & Scott, 1877), prefatory note.
4 Darlow, op. cit., p. 30.

ter of the congregation of the Chalmers Presbyterian Church of Adelaide, South Australia. Nicoll had the desire to go, but his father restrained him, being distressed at the thought of his emigration.

Nevertheless, "he was steadily advancing in reputation, both in his own Church and in the wider world of literature, and he was able to enjoy occasional holidays in London and on the Continent."[1]

It was this reputation which brought about his change of churches. The Kelso Free Church pulpit had become vacant, and the church fathers sought out the Rev. William Robertson Nicoll. Their attention was drawn to him because his book Calls to Christ had received such enthusiastic praise in the Fountain by Dr. Joseph Parker, in the Daily Review by Professor Henry Drummond, and in the Sword and Trowel by the Rev. C. H. Spurgeon.[2] In the spring of 1877 Nicoll preached to the congregation of Kelso who were so impressed by the young minister's ability, that they sent to him a unanimous invitation to become their full-time minister. So in August, 1877, Nicoll accepted, and became minister to the people of the Free Church of Kelso. The induction services and social were held in September in the largest building in Kelso, the Corn Exchange. "The Rev. Harry Nicoll appeared on the platform - though he characteristically disapproved of the removal from Dufftown, where he considered his son might have lived on in quiet happiness, with abundance of time for study and few distractions from the outside world."[3]

At Kelso, church work and local activities began to absorb his time. In the spring of his first year in the town he was elected pres-

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1 Stoddart, op. cit., p. 45.
2 Ibid, p. 49.
3 Darlow, op. cit., p. 36.

ident of the local Dialectic Society, before which he read a paper on "George Eliot." On another occasion Nicoll lectured on "Reading and Speaking." During the same season he became Moderator of the Presbytery. In the following January, he lectured to the Kelso Mutual Improvement Society on, "Footfalls on the Boundary of another World: Ghosts, Dreams and Spiritualism."[1] At one time he was even elected one of a committee to organize a town band. His church work flourished. His sister, Maria, wrote to her father concerning W.R.N.'s activities,

> . . . When the visiting is over he'll have more leisure. He visits for two hours twice a week. On Sat. last he had 4 meetings, 3 in the Ch. & a cottage meeting. These cottage meetings are for non-church goers. They were visited before & invited to come. The meeting in the afternoon was for children & in the evening for young men. In the evening the Ch. was quite crowded they were sitting on the pulpit stairs . . . .[2]

Concerning the younger members of the Kelso Church and Nicoll's interest in them, J. T. Stoddart remarks,

> He was remarkably successful as a preacher to children, and was always welcome in the Sunday School. But those who looked up to him with most confidence and admiration were the young men just entering on life, who received from his preaching, and still more from his private counsels, an intellectual and spiritual quickening which often transformed their whole career. Unlike his father in the remote Highland library, Mr. Nicoll was always ready to lend books, and would spend hours talking with young people over their studies, and stirring up their interest in the best authors. Many received from him an education in English literature more valuable than any college could have supplied. As regards his preaching there was a general agreement that he must some day fill a much larger sphere.[3]

In 1878, the Rev. W. R. Nicoll ended his bachelor days by marrying Miss Isa Duhlop, the twenty year old daughter of a well-to-do Border country farmer, who had died soon after her birth; from early childhood

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1 Stoddart, op. cit., p. 54.
2 From an unpublished letter written April 10, 1877, from Maria Nicoll to her father, the Rev. Harry Nicoll.
3 Stoddart, op. cit., pp. 55 f.

she had lived in Kelso with her widowed mother.

During his eight years' stay in Kelso, Nicoll preached in many of the Free Church pulpits in Edinburgh. He also travelled widely, visiting such places on the Continent as Cracow, Warsaw, Bohemia, Denmark, Sweden and Norway.

His literary activity grew apace. He became literary adviser in 1879 to the Edinburgh firm of Messrs. Macniven and Wallace, the publishers for whom he edited the Household Library of Exposition. This was a series of volumes on religious subjects by well-known religious teachers of the day. The Lamb of God: Expositions in the Writings of St. John by W. R. Nicoll was published in this series in 1883. The year he became literary adviser, the same publishing firm put out a small volume called Songs of Rest, an anthology of religious verse compiled by W.R.N..[1] In 1881, The Incarnate Saviour was published. This was a life of Christ which Nicoll had written in Dufftown, preached in Kelso, and then compiled as a book.

It was also at Kelso that Nicoll first undertook magazine editing. The London publishers, Messrs. Swan Sonnenschein and Co. persuaded him to take charge of a homiletic magazine called the Contemporary Pulpit. The first issue, which came out in January, 1884, contained sermons and sermon outlines from outstanding preachers of the time. The publication lasted ten years.

In 1884, Nicoll made the proposition to Messrs. Hodder and Stoughton that he should edit for them a series of volumes with the general title of The Clerical Library. They agreed, and this project was the

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1 This volume contains a poem by Nicoll and one by Nicoll's sister Eliza, who had died in 1873, at the age of 18, the year before he went to Dufftown.

start of a long and happy connection with the firm. Later Mr. Stoughton visited Kelso to seek Nicoll's advice about Hodder and Stoughton's theological monthly magazine, the Expositor.

> This had been edited since its foundation in 1875, by Dr. Samuel Cox, of Nottingham, himself a gifted expositor and skilled Hebraist. Latterly, however, the proprietors realized that Dr. Cox's personal views on eschatology and inspiration offended and alarmed a section of his readers, who included clergy and ministers of all Churches. The firm had decided on a change of editorship, and they finally offered this post to Nicoll.[1]

After much cogitation Nicoll agreed to accept the position and continued as editor from January of 1885 until he died. This editorship was a great mental stimulus to Nicoll.

> /He/ was brought for the first time into connection with the Church of England, and soon gathered around him a staff which included many Anglican scholars. He visited the venerable Franz Delitzsch at Leipzig, and the brilliant Wellhausen at Greifswald. One of his earliest foreign friends was the great Kuenen, whom he met on his first visit to Leyden.[2]

These contacts and experiences proved fruitful for the rest of his life.

All of these activities were extraneous to Nicoll's weekly preaching and church duties. His real allegiance however, belonged to his congregation, which was at this time over 400 members strong. In a letter to his father written in February, 1883, Nicoll said,

> I have been overwhelmed with work. On Monday I preached at Gordon; on Tuesday I lectured in the Town Hall here on Ireland; on Wednesday I have my prayer meeting; tomorrow I lecture at Crailing; on Friday I preach in Edinburgh, and on Sunday at St. Andrews. After that I shall be quieter.[3]

But things did not get quieter. His great propensity for industry and literary output saw him become editor of the Expositor, about which he wrote when he undertook it, "The success of the Expositor has been great,

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1 Darlow, op. cit., p. 45
2 Stoddart, op. cit., p. 59.
3 Quoted in Darlow, op. cit., p. 45.

and I have a great deal of pleasure about it, but the correspondence involved has been awful."[1]

The turning point of Nicoll's life and his most sombre time was the year 1885. First there was the death of his brother, Henry J. Nicoll, a man of exceptional literary promise, who at the age twenty-seven, succumbed to consumption at the Kelso manse.[2]

It was in June of this same year that Nicoll contracted typhoid. He had always suffered from a weak lung, and when pleurisy with its complications arose, the situation grew grave indeed. It appeared likely that the dread disease that had haunted his family might claim him also. Edinburgh specialists could give no encouragement and staked their only hope in his immediate removal to a warmer climate.

The story is told in Nicoll's letter read before the Presbytery meeting on January 5th, 1886.

> It is with much regret that I am constrained to place the resignation of my charge at Kelso in the hands of the Presbytery. The medical certificates accompanying will explain the circumstances in which I am placed. An attack of typhoid fever, from which I partially rallied, was followed by pleuritic symptoms which led to great prostration. I was counselled by my medical advisers to resign my charge and abstain for a lengthened period from ministerial work . . . . The shortest period named was two years. Considering that I have been already about six months absent, I should not have thought of asking my congregation to wait so long, even had I been certain of being able to serve them then. But it is very doubtful whether at any future

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1 Ibid.

2 On his death the Free Press (January 29, 1885) said of him, "We have never met a man of his years who had read so much, and to such good purpose, in nearly all departments of literature . . . . Along with his elder brother he had projected a work in five volumes on "English Literature in the Victorian Era; for which large materials had been collected." (W.R.N. published this work in 1906 in conjunction with Thomas Seccombe.) Up to the time of his death Henry Nicoll had published six books, Great Scholars, Great Orators, Life of Thomas Carlyle, C Sonnets by C Authors, Great Movements and Those who Achieved Them, and Landmarks of English Literature.

> period I should be able to do the full work of such a charge. In these circumstances, looking to the interests of my people, and to the necessity for my removing soon to a milder climate, and after the most careful and prayerful deliberation and consultation, it seems that no alternative is left to me but the resignation of my charge. It is a consolation to me, in the midst of many painful and anxious thoughts, that I leave the congregation in a prosperous state and thoroughly united, and it will be my constant prayer that they may soon be guided to the choice of a faithful minister.[1]

Portions of two letters to the Rev. W. McRobbie throw much light on Nicoll's thoughts during this period. On December 15, 1885, Nicoll wrote,

> All [the lung specialists] say that I am not in danger now, and after two or three years' rest may resume pulpit work. Meanwhile we have no plans, save that we are to take a house in London to be a home, and I shall take rest abroad probably for a year, continuing my present editorial work but not in the meantime adding to it. I know you will feel much for me in this, and that you will not expect me to say more.[2]

And on January 2, 1886, he wrote to McRobbie,

> We thought over every plan to avoid my severing from the Church but could see nothing. Two years' leave of absence, after six months, would have been too much; but I believe they would have forced it on me had not the medical opinion been that, if I am ever to return to ministerial work, it must be where the acoustics are easy and where meetings that involve night-journeys are unnecessary. The fact is I am in a pretty serious condition. So far the trouble has not advanced to a point from which it cannot retreat. But it easily might, and this is my one chance . . . . I had for six months of last year the tremendous labour of organizing the Expositor from the bottom, and often wrote thirty letters a day. If you ever have typhoid, as I pray you may not, you may find that you are not very fit for correspondence. I see no one being forbidden to converse much. But I have had many touching proofs of kindness and, what is better, that my ministry here has been more useful than I thought it was . . . . You must come and see us, if we ever have a home again.[3]

The pulpit of the Free Church of Kelso was officially declared vacant on Sunday, January 17th, 1886, by the Rev. D. Iverach, of Nenthorn

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1 Records of the Presbytery of Kelso.
2 Quoted in Darlow, op. cit., p. 48.
3 Ibid.

who, at that time, said of Nicoll,

> We feel that we have lost the most brilliant member of our Presbytery . . . . He seemed to have a special power of attracting and captivating young people, and over them he had, as you are aware, an extraordinary influence. His heart was in his pulpit work. Nothing, I think, grieved him more than the suggestion that it would be for his good to get out of the atmosphere of ecclesiastical life in order to make his literary work "a decided success." Had it been a matter of choice with him, he would not have hesitated one moment in laying aside his literary work. It was to him a recreation, his pulpit work was his life work.[1]

Reluctantly the Nicolls left Kelso to spend the winter months on the Devon coast at Dawlish. Slowly Nicoll regained his strength and energy. It was then that his thoughts turned towards London where lay the opportunity for his ceaseless industry and his eager busy brain to find their outlet in the world of letters.

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1 Presbytery Record of Kelso.

CHAPTER IV

The First Editor of the British Weekly

William Robertson Nicoll, unafraid of the future and undaunted by the severe physical blow his life had received, set out at the age of thirty-five, to overcome his predicament. Speaking of this turn in events Nicoll wrote that he had not, even for an hour, contemplated a literary career. "I had expected to go on as a minister, doing literary work in leisure times, but my fate was settled for me, and I resigned my pastorate."[1] His views were that any minister is placed in a position of great difficulty when the failure of his health prevents him from doing his chosen work. As far as business is concerned a minister usually lacks the qualifications. Teaching is open to him, but such an occupation is usually as much a drain on his vitality as the pastorate. Almost the only thing open to him is literary work.

> I have never troubled to consider whether the work of the preacher or the work of the journalist is the more important. Much may be said on both sides. But it was never in any way an issue for me. It is surely right that a man should continue in the work the Providence has assigned to him so long as he can, and this was the course I took. When one door is closed to him, he has to consider whether another door will open. I am thankful that the door opened to me, and I can now perceive that the training and habits of former years helped me to enter it. I was familiar from the start with the ordinary routine of journalism, though I had much to learn, and though for a considerable time handicapped by weak health, I had more opportunities than most journalists of quiet reading.[2]

For twelve years he had been in the active ministry, and the greater part of each day he had spent doing considerable reading. In his first parish, that of Dufftown, he had spent from twelve to sixteen

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1 W. R. Nicoll, "How I Became a Journalist," Home Messenger, November, 1909.

2 Ibid.

hours a day during the winter months reading and writing regularly and systematically. This background was now to come to his aid.

In spite of the fact that he said that he never troubled to consider which was the more important work, that of the ministry or journalism, he went on to say in the same article that,

> If I were asked by a young man whether journalism or the pulpit offered the best career in the twentieth century, my feeling would be all on the side of the pulpit . . . . The true Christian preacher may do more to guide the nation through its perplexities than is possible to the journalist.[1]

But all that was behind Robertson Nicoll; his face was set steadfastly forward. The ministry was no longer a profession for him. His health denied him that, but as his health began to return he began to appraise his situation. In a letter to his friend, the Rev. W. McRobbie, Nicoll wrote in 1886:

> I now feel pretty sure that I shall get over this danger. But from all the doctors say, I have no expectation of being ever able to preach more than once a day - so I must turn my mind to editorial work, in which I think I may be as useful as I could ever have been in any other way if strength be granted. I have had much encouragement from Hodder & Stoughton. They were anxious I should undertake additional editorial work, which would have raised my income and to which if in good health I should be perfectly equal. But I thought it wise to take a year's comparative rest. As it is, what I have from them, with our own, is ample for all our needs and I may have to go abroad for part of the winter. I am looking forward, however, to editing a paper which will serve the cause of the Free Churches in this country in these difficult days - the said cause being, I believe more than ever, the cause of Christ.[2]

After spending May and June in the Swiss Alps, he returned to London with new vigour and courage. He was willing to take up journalistic duties, especially after his physician pronounced him as sound as could be expected. He wrote to Dr. Dods that his lung was paining him

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1 Ibid.
2 Letter from W.R.N. to the Rev. W. McRobbie, March 21, 1886.

since he returned home but his specialist, Sir Andrew Clark, had told him that the pain was purely muscular and that the lung was almost right, and that by autumn he should be quite well again.[1] Sir Andrew Clark also told him that he could take up as much editorial work as he felt capable of, so long as it did not involve worry or night exposure. Public speaking was to be avoided, for the time being anyway, and trips abroad in the winter would not be necessary as part of the cure. This diagnosis pleased Nicoll very much, as now the way was open to pursue the one occupation left open to him, the occupation that held second place in his heart - journalism.

The Messrs. Matthew Hodder and Thomas W. Stoughton had geographically divided the world between them as individuals in order that they might intensively cultivate it as a field of operation for their publishing house. They were not only evangelical publishers but also shrewd merchants and propagandists. The senior member of the co-partnership, Mr. Hodder, took responsibility for the business of London, the United States, Canada, and other colonies of the Empire. The home market of England was shared between them, but Mr. Stoughton had the sole and especial care of Scotland. This was very important from a publisher's standpoint. It was small in population but it bought and read great quantities of religious books, and many of the most important books of that day were indebted to Scotland for their authorship. Mr. Stoughton's frequent trips north of the Tweed were not only for selling Hodder & Stoughton publications but also to secure books by Scottish divines and

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1 Letter from W.R.N. to Dr. Marcus Dods, June 23, 1886.

writers.[1]

It was during one of these frequent visits that Mr. Stoughton established a great friendship with the young Kelso minister, William Robertson Nicoll, and in 1884, offered him the editorship of the company's paper called the Expositor.[2]

> . . . towards the end of 1886, Messrs. Hodder and Stoughton, after careful consideration, resolved to start the British Weekly. They were then publishers of the British Quarterly Review, edited by Dr. Henry Allon. The Review had a good literary reputation, but the sales had diminished from 2,500 to 500, and the company to which it belonged were losing money and decided to discontinue it. Messrs. Hodder and Stoughton proposed to the company to take over the British Quarterly and to publish it monthly under my editorship as a Nonconformist review. But the company, who were Congregationalists, did not wish the title to go out of the denomination, and accordingly the British Quarterly Review was amalgamated with the Congregationalist. It was in this way that the British Weekly was named and started. I have continued editor ever since, ...[3]

The name had been suggested by the British Quarterly. Nicoll had at first proffered the title Advance, but Mr. Stoughton's choice, the British Weekly, was the name eventually used. The Congregational Review, the final result of the amalgamation of the British Quarterly Review with the Congregationalist, had a short existence, but the new rival penny weekly under Nicoll's editorship, the British Weekly, started on its long and distinguished career.

Nicoll claimed that it was not started with any idea of being a rival to any existing paper. He believed that there was room for a religious paper along the lines of the Pall Mall Gazette of that time. He

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1 For more complete details on Hodder & Stoughton, see the chapters devoted to their history and background written by a lifelong associate in, George H. Doran, Chronicles of Barabbas, (New York: Harcourt, Brace and Company, 1935), pp. 51 ff. Also Nicoll's memorial to Mr. Hodder in B.W., October 26, 1911, and to Mr. T. W. Stoughton in B.W., "Claudius Clear," March 1, 1917.

2 Jane T. Stoddart, W. Robertson Nicoll, (London: Partridge & Co., 1903), p. 59.

3 W. R. Nicoll, op. cit.

intended its appeal to be aimed at the ministers and the laity in the dissenting churches - not exclusively dissenting, but mainly these. He also thought that in the coming years, social questions would attract a great deal of attention, and so that the churches' attention should be called to these he intended to give these questions space. He also foresaw a growing interest in literature and therefore proposed to give space to that interest. "So combining these ideas we started."[1]

In reality, it was a venture of faith. It took foresight and courage to launch out into the crowded press world with a new paper. Hodder and Stoughton furnished the capital and the business organization, while Nicoll, practically an amateur journalist, agreed to edit it. The publishers wisely gave Nicoll an absolutely free hand to advance the paper. It was this freedom of editorship, and freedom from the worries of the business end of the paper that eventually, under Nicoll's guidance, started the British Weekly on the road to success.

Nicoll knew that the road to success, if he were to attain it, would be an arduous one. Five months before the British Weekly was published, Nicoll wrote to Dr. Marcus Dods, one of his best friends, saying that he was afraid to start to write about journalism for fear he would never stop, because he was so interested in the subject. He agreed that the power of first-rate newspaper writing was very rare. "The great difficulty to my mind is that of maintaining from week to week the seriousness and steady magnanimity which are absolutely essential to real influence."[2] He believed that he could produce as interesting paper

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1 _____ "An Interview with Dr. Nicoll," Young Man, June, 1893.
2 Letter from W.R. Nicoll to Dr. Marcus Dods, June 16, 1886, quoted in Darlow, pp. 68 f.

as anyone, but he knew how great were the temptations to personality, sarcasm, and retaliation. These when yielded to caused influence to cease.

> See the Saturday Review, which was never so clever as now; its editor, W. H. Pollock, I consider the very cleverest man in all England, and he and Austin Dobson every week have most brilliant writing. But the paper has no more influence than a penny trumpet. Then his maniacal spite has wrecked Stead.[1] Lucy in the Daily News has turned out a disastrous failure. On the other hand, the Guardian, Spectator, and Standard, especially the second, owe their power very much to the upright and candid tone in which they have always been written. I know my danger is there.[2]

A month before the B.W. was published Nicoll wrote to the same friend:

> The mortality among magazines this year is frightful. The following are dead, or die in the year: Interpreter, British Quarterly, British and Foreign Evangelical Review, Clergyman's Magazine, Congregationalist. In all these cases but one the death is due simply to editorial carelessness and incapacity.[3]

Later in a lecture on "The Profession of Journalism" to the members of the Aberdeen University Debating Society he flatly stated about newspapers that, "only 3 per cent survived,"[4] which showed that there must have been great difficulty in maintaining one.

"The Tragedy of First Numbers" was the title of a "Claudius Clear" letter which W.R.N. wrote in the British Weekly after enough time had passed to enable him to reflect upon the problems surrounding the publication of periodicals through their initial issue.

> First numbers are very often tragical. After all the fuss has been gone through, after all the countless difficulties have been for the time surmounted, you have placed in your hands the first issue of your new paper. You are sick when you see it, and grow sicker with every page you turn over. The shortcomings, the blunders, the faults of every kind stand out with glaring and appalling clearness.[5]

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1 W.T. Stead, editor of the Pall Mall Gazette.
2 Letter from W.R. Nicoll to Dr. Marcus Dods, June 16, 1886.
3 Letter from W.R. Nicoll to Dr. Marcus Dods, October 5, 1886, quoted in Darlow, op. cit., p. 71.
4 Account of the lecture in Aberdeen Free Press, November 1, 1895.
5 Published in W.R. Nicoll, Daybook of Claudius Clear, pp. 283f.

He went on to trace the hypothetical history of a first number that failed, telling why he thought such tragedies occurred. "Perhaps there are fifty such tragedies every year in England."[1]

But certain as he was of the reason for the failure of so many, he was just as certain of the qualities necessary for success. In fact it was his knowledge of the history of journalism and his study of the failures that gave to him the concepts of what a successful paper should be. In analysing failures he found that they fell into one or more of four categories: 1) The idea of the paper may be wrong 2) There may be lack of unity in the contents of the paper 3) There may be a lack of interest in the contents. "A good paper is like a well arranged dinner. There should be substantial food and delicacies to tempt the appetite."[2] 4) The fault may be not the editor's but the publisher's. "I have seen first numbers which were not amiss, so far as the literary contents were concerned but they were spoiled by bad paper and unsatisfactory printing."[3]

These views concerned journalism in its entirety, but at first his specific field was religious journalism. Soon after he started the British Weekly an interviewer asked Nicoll what he thought of the religious journalism of the day. He told the reporter that on the whole he thought it to be in a very satisfactory state. The development had been great in the previous ten years, especially with regard to Nonconformist journalism, the tendency of which had been toward unsectarianism. Nicoll's view was that denominational papers took the least prominent place, with the exception, perhaps, of Methodist papers.

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1 Ibid, p. 285.
2 Ibid, p. 288.
3 Ibid, p. 289.

> The Church of England journals are well maintained, and perhaps increase in vigour and power, but I do not know that any important addition has been made to their numbers. But within the last ten years three or four Nonconformist papers have been started and taken good places.[1]

As for the editorial instinct, when asked what were the special gifts required by the editor of a religious newspaper, Nicoll replied that it was becoming more and more important that he should be widely interested in "life," social problems, politics and literature. Practically gone was the idea that religious journalism should be content with religious articles and ecclesiastical news, leaving all other things alone. What people felt was necessary, according to Nicoll, was,

> that the whole range of subjects in which men and women are interested should be dealt with, from a frankly and distinctively Christian standpoint, more especially as the secular press inclines less and less to make definitely Christian assumptions. While the secular press is friendly to Christianity on the whole, it leaves to religious people the expression of religious opinions.[2]

The views of Nicoll on his adopted profession are set forth most concisely in his answer to this same interviewer's question as to how the gifts required by the editor of a religious newspaper differed from those required by the editor of a secular paper. It was his belief that the religious newspaper editor should have a considerable knowledge of, and sympathy with, ecclesiastical organisations which could hardly be expected of the ordinary secular journalist. He thought, though, that at the same time, the readers of religious newspapers expected to find the same qualities in a religious newspaper as they did in their ordinary newspapers. "They are not prepared to put up with dullness, incompetence, or belatedness. They demand a certain measure of freshness, life, and

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1 An interview with "P.L.P." in the East Anglian Daily Times, April 15, 1895.

2 Ibid.

vigour."[1]

In this same period of time, Nicoll said, "In regard to circulation and influence, taking the aggregate, I feel certain that religious journalism was never so high as at present."[2] But he was also fully aware of the difficulties. The difficulties were that the readers of religious journals were then more or less readers of secular papers, daily or at least weekly, and the religious journals were confronted by the question of how far they should attempt to discharge the functions of secular newspapers in giving news. For example,

> A religious paper might ten years ago have practically done the work of Lloyd's as well as its own work, but the readers of religious journals tend, I think, more and more to be intelligent people and to read daily papers; so that if you repeat what they have read before, unless you can give freshness and piquancy to it, they are apt to feel that it is all stale.[3]

This repetition of his ideas that a religious journal in order to succeed must give "freshness" gives an idea of the predominant thought in his mind. Indeed "freshness" seems to be his key word and in actuality it sums up the major attribute of the British Weekly from the very beginning. But "freshness" in any periodical presupposes an editor with fresh ideas, and the successful editor should have a plan in presenting these ideas. Nicoll had many ideas for which he was convinced there was ample room in the field of religious journalism. He was asked if he thought that the ground religious journals sought to occupy was covered. His answer was that the ground was covered in regard to the religious journals of the type then in existence, but he thought that the ground was not occupied at all so far as a genuinely popular and yet respectable religious

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1 Ibid.
2 In an interview called, "The Editor of the British Weekly," in Young Man, June, 1893.
3 Ibid.

paper was concerned. His idea was that there should be something that would do for religious readers what the magazine called Tit-Bits did for secular readers. "My opinion is that the great enterprise of the future is religious journalism. All the existing papers appeal to an educated class of readers, with one or two notorious exceptions."[1]

In Nicoll's day a successful periodical usually meant a successful editor, and in like manner in an unsuccessful publication the blame was laid at the feet of the editor. Nicoll believed that some editors threw their nets too wide in trying to hit all classes and consequently their papers contained too little to hit one. Other editors aimed at too small a class to keep their journal living. This was, he claimed, "the rock on which the most experienced and sagacious pressmen will split."[2] Without the actual experiment it would be hard to tell whether the public aimed at was sufficiently numerous, or even already supplied well enough with periodicals of one type or another.

> The editor is a purveyor and not a cook. It seems easy enough. Order a joint from Sir James Stephen, a pudding from Mr. Lang, and so on. There must be some editorial contrivance, arrangement, suggestion, or the whole will be naught. . . . A paper is like a meal. Unless well cooked and well laid out it does not tempt, however excellent may be the materials used. The editor need not write, but unless with subtle faculty he permeates the whole, the brute power of money will not carry him through.[3]

As an editor, his governing idea was to get into his paper things that could not be found elsewhere, and to omit as much as possible of what other papers had. "Flimsy" - that is copy which went round to a whole group of papers - he detested, and it is safe to say that it was rarely,

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1 Ibid.
2 W.R. Nicoll, People and Books, (London: Hodder & Stoughton, [n.d.]), p. 112.
3 Ibid.

if ever, found in the papers he edited.

William Robertson Nicoll had now become a professional journalist. Not only did his livelihood depend upon it, but it was to be his "pulpit," and his only means of expressing the ideas with which he was teeming, and the only outlet for his ceaseless vigour and energy which he would gladly, and even morewillingly, have devoted to the ministry, but now must devote to his new world - the world of journalism.

> Journalism, in fact is an act of judgment from beginning to end. It has little to do with writing, let alone "good" writing. Writing is merely the markings made by man's hand, reflecting his mind; writing is automatic, whether a man's mind is clear or fogged. It is often most revealing when his mind is fogged. The supposed difficulty of writing is entirely a difficulty of thinking.[1]

Robertson Nicoll had no difficulty in thinking or in writing. He had begun to write for various periodicals at a very early age. This practice he had continued, and reinforced by his education, his vast reading, and his thorough knowledge of the history of journalism. Thus he had developed the qualities of a journalist. From the beginning his Scottish shrewdness adopted whatever was best and most effective in the ideas of the pioneers of religious journalism, and to these he added fresh ideas of his own. In describing James Macdonell of the Times Nicoll said,

> /He was/ the most brilliant journalist of the last thirty years . . . I define a brilliant journalist in this way. When you read his anonymous article you should say, 'I wonder who wrote this?' Use this test, and you will perceive very soon how few brilliant journalists there are.[2]

It was this broad background which qualified Nicoll as a leader-writer, and it was the leader of Nicoll's day which swayed people and

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1 Robert Sinclair, The British Press, (London: Home and Van Thal, 1949), p. 31.

2 "The Diary of Dr. Thirdly," /Written anonymously by W.R.N./, British Monthly, December, 1900.

indicated to them the policy of the paper. Robertson Nicoll's belief in the influence of the leader and his ability to write them accounted, in no small way, for a great measure of the British Weekly's popularity and success. His assistant editor wrote that a characteristic of the paper from the outset was the religious leading article. Mr. Nicoll thought that religious papers did not give enough direct religious instruction, and he determined that his own articles should not be devoted mainly to ecclesiastical, political or literary matters, but to religion. "For the first three years of the paper, every leader was from his own pen, and the lowest number written by him during any year has been forty-one out of fifty-two."[1] Although this is not strictly accurate, (she overlooked two leaders which were written in the first year by Professor Henry Drummond)[2] it still shows the emphasis and faith Nicoll put in leaders. It caused a contemporary religious paper to say, "From the beginning there had been in the paper [the B.W.] a type of leader writing which was quite new, and continued unmatched by any other paper."[3] In 1895, Nicoll told the Aberdeen Debating Society, "that there was no sign of leaders being ultimately omitted from newspapers."[4] He went on to say that leaders were never so influential as they were at the time he was speaking. Then he listed what he believed to be the qualifications of a

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1 Stoddart, op. cit., p. 70.

2 She acknowledges this inaccuracy herself. "The fourth number [Nov. 26, 1886] contained a striking article by Professor Drummond on Irish Affairs . . . ." p. 72. And "Professor Drummond followed in the sixth [Dec. 10, 1886] with a second article entitled, 'Liberalism, the Christianity of Politics'." p. 73. The former was an unsigned leader and the second was an unsigned second leader.

3 United Methodist, May 10, 1923.

4 From a report of Nicoll's talk on "The Profession of Journalism" before the Aberdeen University Debating Society in the Aberdeen Free Press, November 1, 1895.

religious leader writer. The first qualification was knowledge. Biography and memoirs, everything in the periodicals of a solid kind, old volumes of reviews and magazines, especially political history, all helped him on his way. The great subject for which well-informed leader writers would be more and more wanted was that of foreign politics. Then sociology must be studied, a bright and concise style would be cultivated and there must be conviction.

Early in his life he had written for newspapers and journals, but he had never edited. Later as editor of the Expositor he edited but wrote practically nothing. Now in the British Weekly he was to be responsible for everything - he was an editor in the full sense of the word.

> Though the highest function of an editor is embodied in the etymology of the word (a 'bringer forth' or produced), as one who acts as the literary midwife in the literary setting forth of ideas; it is probably his use of the proverbial blue-pencil, altering or deleting, which is generally associated with the word "to edit."[1]

An importance of its own is attached to every aspect of editorial work, with its organization and inspiration matched by the shaping of the whole into a unit. So the emphasis put on any one phase determines the relationship which "good" editing bears to the character of the paper that is to be produced.

> An editor must be intellectually equal to his staff, however; he must know what interests people, he must have a quick eye for writers, he must keep his staff in good humour, he must be able to shoot a personality, an element of individuality, into everything; he must be a man of resource and fortitude.[2]

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1 H. Chisholm, "Newspapers," Encyclopedia Britannica, 11th ed., Vol. 19, p. 546.

2 From a report of Nicoll's talk on "The Profession of Journalism" before the Aberdeen University Debating Society in the Aberdeen Free Press November 1, 1895.

On Friday, November 5, 1886, William Robertson Nicoll presented to the public the first issue of the British Weekly: A Journal of Social and Christian Progress. He had no illusions as to the difficulties involved, nor were his apprehensions all unsupported. He cited these in a letter, written to his former publisher, a few weeks before the first issue of the B.W..

> I have got as much good advice as would sink a navy, and had as many difficulties started as would cover Great Britain if they were trees, and have had to find courage, hope, and will for a hundred. But I have taken all very coolly, and am confident that working together we shall make it a great success. My chief consolation has been the history of the American editor who died lately at the age of 90, and attributed his health and longevity entirely to the fact that he never expected to please anybody and never tried to.[1]

The first British Weekly was of double quarto size of twenty pages, with two columns to a page. It was a "newspaper" according to the Post Office regulations and it was registered as such at the General Post Office. Of the twenty pages, six and one-half were filled with advertisements, mostly taken up by booksellers and book publishers of religious publications. The price was one penny. On the first page Nicoll wrote a leader, a column and a half long, called "The Creed and the Hope of Progress." In it were stated the high ideals under which the paper was started.

> The creed we shall seek to expound in this journal will be that of progress, and while independent of any sect or party, we shall aim at the ends of what is known as Advanced Liberalism. We are believers in progress because we are believers in the advancing reign of Christ. To His appearing, and to the work He planned and did, we trace all that marks the superiority of the new world to the old, and all that is pregnant with growth and improvement yet to come. His day has only dawned, and great as has been the influence on human happiness

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1 A letter to Mr. J. Macniven of Macniven and Wallace, Edinburgh, October 15, 1886, quoted in Darlow, op. cit., p. 71.

> of the principles of Christianity we believe that from these principles will yet issue almost unlimited developments, even for the physical life of man.[1]

This the editor called a language of high hope, but it was necessary because of the situation confronting the people which was "at once novel and painful." The time had come for which the people had longed - "the hour of the emancipation of the people," but the circumstances were not what had been expected.[2]

The leader goes on to say that the leading power, the Tory Government, had gained its position by dubious means; and what seemed to be worse, "the Liberal party is rent in twain by an angry feud which ranges on opposite sides who but yesterday were the truest comrades." This division was so disastrous that the editor said that friends and enemies alike were tempted to apply to it Robert Hall's description of Unitarianism - "a headless trunk bleeding at every pore." He said that pessimism was foolish for those who advocate progress. That in spite of the rents and fractures, in spite of the short-comings and defects of the leaders, the trend toward temperance and chastity would persist. The nation's whole heart strove towards the great truths of Christianity. He saw justice prevailing and the world taking the torch from those philanthropists and leaders, those men and women who gave their all that Christian principles might persist. From this note he struck the chord of encouragement, "even in the condition of the Liberal party, the great instrument of progress, there is much to encourage."[3]

Then he summed up the reasons why the Liberal party should main-

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1 British Weekly, November 5, 1886.
2 Ibid.
3 Ibid.

tain hope, and said that the main body of the Liberal party would have to prepare a new programme. He ended the leader by naming those whom he believed held the hopes of the party: Mr. Morley, Lord Rosebery (who at one time had been the proprietor of the Radical Examiner), and "the greatest of all," Mr. Gladstone. With the leadership of these men, and through the loyalty of their adherents the editor believed the time would come "when all true Liberals will band themselves together for new campaigns against wrong."[1]

The split in loyalties to which Nicoll was referring was that caused by the first Home Rule Bill. Although Nicoll's father and a great host of other Nonconformists were staunch followers of Gladstone, Robertson Nicoll could not see eye-to-eye with him. Primarily they were of vastly different opinions; Gladstone an Anglo-Catholic and Nicoll a Nonconformist. It was basically this difference that caused Nicoll's later attacks on Gladstone in the British Weekly. Indeed, in this very leader Nicoll says, "Nothing could be more sterile and disheartening than the idea of going to the country with Home Rule and Mr. Gladstone's four points."[2] But Nicoll had vowed to sink personalities in his new venture. Besides, politics at this time were concentrated upon the Irish problem and on the main issue Nicoll agreed that Gladstone would lead them.

For the moment the production of his paper occupied all his energies. In November of 1886, Nicoll wrote to Dods. "To one who has been twelve years a Free Church minister the labour of editing seems trifling and the worry nil."[3] But Nicoll evidently changed his mind in

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1 Ibid.
2 Ibid.
3 Darlow, op. cit., pp. 74 f.

a hurry, for a letter to the same friend appears dated January 29, 1887, in which Nicoll writes, "The B.W. is by many degrees the heaviest task I have ever undertaken, and if I can pull it through I shall have a right to sober elation."[1] His efforts were not haphazard. The first issue shows a masterly journalistic hand. It was well planned. One of the major characteristics from the beginning was the religious leading article, for through it Nicoll assumed the task of making religious journalism popular with the masses.

Sharing the front page of the first issue was the announcement of the B.W.'s religious census of London. This article mentioned that the census had been taken on October 24th, 1886. It was an enumeration of the worshippers attending, that Sunday, the two principal services in the chapels and churches of London. To take the census thousands of persons were employed to cover the 1,500 places of worship involved. Nicoll explained that the cost and the enormity of the labour involved had prohibited a satisfactory census being compiled previously. A census had been taken of the London churches in 1881 by the St. James's Gazette, and the Census of 1851 had contained religious census with the aim of discovering the number of places of worship, their seating accommodation, and the number of persons attending on a set Sunday. The violent controversies attending the latter census probably explains why it was not repeated in the Census of 1861. This controversy might also have been Nicoll's reason for overlooking the 1851 census. However, the B.W.'s census was the most recently done; it was an enormous task well supervised, and it attracted such attention that the public was drawn to

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1 Darlow, op. cit., pp. 74 f.

the paper, whose circulation began to increase from that day on. Even Nicoll's census caused controversy and angry correspondence which denied the accuracy of the figures, but none of the claims were ever substantiated and there were many acclamations of the work done. Mr. Gladstone wrote: "As one of the public Mr. Gladstone feels very much indebted to the Editor, especially in the present very defective state of our information as to the religious census of London."[1] Other letters from eminent people were included with that of Mr. Gladstone, all praising the census. Two issues later, General Booth of the Salvation Army wrote almost a column of comment. Such published praise helped to increase the sale of the paper.

In the first issue there were other features which became regular departments of the paper. A "Sermon Column" contained two sermon summaries, one by the Rev. C. H. Spurgeon and one by the Rev. Marcus Dods. This column later became known as the "British Weekly Pulpit," which not only became a regular feature, but in May, 1888, was issued separately, in enlarged form, as a penny weekly called the British Weekly Pulpit. It contained reports of sermons preached throughout Britain, and continued until the end of 1890. Another column headed, "Literature" and called, "The New Literary Anecdotes" was by Nicoll himself who signed it "N." The first one of these was about the Brontë sisters. It included a reproduction of an unpublished pencil-sketch of Anne Brontë by her sister Charlotte. This was the first of many reproductions which appeared from time to time in the columns of the B.W. to enlighten the readers, and also to enliven the pages, to maintain interest and to

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1 B.W., December 24, 1886.

break up the monotony of the printed word.

The column called "News of the Churches" varied from one to two columns in length, depending on the quantity of news sent in to the paper. Later appeals were made to readers to send in their news. This appeared under the heading of the various denominations; each church had its own news, which usually ended with a list of calls and deaths in that group.

Another item which continued from the first issue was called "Notes of the Week." This was a selection of news items written into chatty and descriptive paragraphs. News, as news, never occupied a central place in the B.W. but this item sometimes running to three and four columns, kept the faithful reader informed of the news of the world which the editorial staff (Nicoll) deemed it necessary for them to know.

A closely related column to this was the regular feature which Nicoll called "Table Talk," which finally became "British Table Talk," but was also at times called "Fresh Items" and at others "Notablia." This was a gossipy column, or two, a sort of catch-all for miscellaneous odds and ends concerning anybody or anything. An example from the first issue:

> The Journal, the new morning paper, edited by Mr. Dicey of the Observer, has made its appearance. We have never been able to see Mr. Dicey's editorial ability, and if it is represented in The Journal, we imagine the public will also fail to see it. An idea of the paper may be given by saying that it consists of the London telegrams in a provincial newspaper, with a few fatuously weak comments. There is room in London for a new kind of daily paper, but Mr. Dicey has missed the mark.[1]

Two items from the second issue: "It is rumoured that there is to be a new monthly review started in the interests of the Free Churches," and

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1 B.W., November 5, 1886.

"Over 50,000 have been sold of Mr. Hoggard's [sic] story, "King Solomon's Mines," a number greater than even Mr. Stevenson's recent works have reached."[1]

One of the departments which began with the initial issue was the group of family type articles called the "Home Department," or, as in some issues, the "Home Circle," although in later numbers no name at all was attached. It consisted first of a chapter of a serial story. When one ended another started. Next there was the unit, "Sermonette For Sunday On the International Lesson." Each lesson was dated for the following Sunday, and included the Scripture Lesson reference and the Golden Text plus the sermonette about which it was always explained in a footnote: "These Sermonettes are original or abridged." The third portion of this family section, in the beginning, was some type of a prize offer. In the first few issues this was headed, "To Literary Aspirants - Offer of Prizes." This particular contest ran for ten issues and then was replaced with another. The initial contest was for three prizes. One was to be awarded for the best suggestions for the improvement of the British Weekly. A second prize was explained thus:

> It is hoped to give in nearly every number of the British Weekly a poem. Within ten days after fifteen of these have been published, readers are invited to send the name of what they consider the best of these, with a brief essay, not to exceed five hundred words, justifying their choice.[2]

The third prize was for literary criticism. "When Miss Doudney's story, 'A Son of the Morning,' is completed, readers are invited to send a criticism not exceeding fifteen hundred words . . . . It is right to say that the accomplished authoress has given her most cordial sanction to this

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1 B.W., November 12, 1886.
2 B.W., November 5, 1886.

proposal."[1] The criticism was to be sent in within ten days of the date of the publication of the last instalment. The winners of the first contest were announced in the twelfth issue, January 21st, 1887. The story alluded to in the contest was innocuous and pseudo-religious. It continued for ten issues and was followed by a serial story by Annie S. Swan. Another contest had already begun in the issue previous to the one containing the list of winners.

The first issue also contained reviews of books which were for the most part, of a religious character.

The masthead of this issue declared that,

> The British Weekly is intended to provide an organ for the Christian democracy of the country, which, while thoroughly popular, shall be of the first class in point of influence and literary standing. The following are among many representatives of advanced Christian Liberalism in England, Scotland, and Wales who have agreed to support the new journal.[2]

Here followed thirty-five names of well-known churchmen and laymen, such as: W. B. Barbour, M.P., Rev. Prof. W. G. Blaikie, D.D., LL.D., Rev. Principal Cairns, D.D., LL.D., Dr. G. B. Clark, M.P., A. W. W. Dale, M.A., Rev. Marcus Dods, D.D., Rev. Principal T. C. Edwards, M.A., J. Lawrence Gane, Q.C., M.P., Charles Maclaren, M.P., Rev. Principal Rainy, D.D., Angus Sutherland, M.P., Rev. Prof. Owen C. Whitehouse, M.A., Rev. Alexander Whyte, D.D., and Prof. A. S. Wilkins, M.A..

These men, and the others listed, were friends of Nicoll, or at least believed in him enough to endorse this new venture. Many of them were contributors. Marcus Dods, for example, contributed to the very first issue of the British Weekly and faithfully submitted articles and sermons regularly right up to the time of his death in 1909. Next to

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1 Ibid.
2 Ibid.

Nicoll the most consistent and faithful contributor to the B.W. was Dods. Marcus Dods and Nicoll maintained their friendship for over twenty-five years. Of this friendship Nicoll wrote: "I had the unspeakable privilege of knowing him as one man can seldom know another . . . . He was the best friend and the most Christlike man I have ever known . . . I have no hope of making up his loss or of finding such another friend again."[1]

It is interesting to analyse Nicoll's method of attracting the reader's attention and maintaining his interest when he started the B.W.. He began by picking an item, the Religious Census, that would attract the widest religious attention possible. This census proved to be a happy choice because not only did it attract attention but the controversy aroused by it intensified that attention. He was a wise enough journalist to have had it completely planned and executed before he even gave a notice of it in his paper. If he had announced the prospects of a census to be taken, factors could have arisen which could have been sound basis for controversy. Just such a crisis arose in Wales when the Banner announced a proposed census. The Church of England was then alleged to have made a drive and packed its churches on the appointed Sunday.[2] Nicoll's census attracted the attention of the denominational leaders.

But he also aimed at attracting the popular audience. He provided ample material for home reading to suit the tastes of the ladies of the household. The continued story was a well planned move, as was the contest with cash awards. These all maintained the interest from

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1 W.R. Nicoll, Princes of the Church, (London: Hodder and Stoughton, 1921), pp. 234 f.

2 For details of this unsuccessful census see B.W., January 14, 1887. Curiously, these accounts in this and the following issue consistently refer to the Banner as the Baner.

copy to copy. The poems, prayers, sermons and general gossip all lent a homely touch which had a strong appeal. Series, serials and other methods followed in later issues.

It is also interesting to note how many of the departments in the initial issue became items of regular publication. Among the many were the front page leader, the news of the churches, the literature section, the serial story, the Sunday School sermonette, the religious articles, the book reviews, the "British Table Talk" column, and usually a sermon or a sermon summary. Most of these, either in the same, or slightly altered form are discernible within the present-day B.W..

It was not easy and Nicoll deserves much credit. He told Miss Stoddart, his invaluable assistant for more than thirty years, "Before you came and when I was quite alone with the British Weekly, I wrote the whole of the thing, and with my own hand.[1] For a year the fate of the paper hung in the balance and it was just a question whether any day I might be informed that Hodder and Stoughton had made up their minds they would close it."[2] But the day came, a year later, when he announced in his leader of the Christmas issue that the paper would continue, and that the initial difficulties had been overcome.

> But our task has been, though toilsome, very pleasant. It is true we have had brought home to us the great mystery of journalism - that all the people who know exactly how to conduct a paper are engaged in other occupations. But never has a day passed that we have not received letters of encouragement . . . . The result is that, though we hope to achieve much more than we have done, the circulation attained by our journal is larger than has ever been reached by any religious paper in the same period, and is steadily growing.[3]

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1 In later years he never wrote anything, using dictation exclusively.

2 J. Stoddart, "Personal Tributes," B.W., May 10, 1923.

3 B.W., December 23, 1887.

This was true, but some factors should not be overlooked. It was at this time that a great new reading public was being created by the ferment of widespread elementary education. The Education Bill of 1870 had begun to bear fruit, and readers were increasing as they had not done in the history of the land. When Nicoll began, Nonconformity was a solemn affair, and any general knowledge of literature completely lacking, but he had an intuitive knowledge of the public mind. He knew what people would read, and he knew how to bring it to their attention; ". . . few journalists have better known how to surround the pill of good literature with the jam of familiar talk."[1] The public was eager and Nicoll seized the opportunity to direct its gropings. In truth he made "popular journalism literary, and he made religious journalism interesting."[2] He did this because care was taken that the issues should be presented to the public in the most suitable form. His knowledge of journalism coupled with his knowledge of people combined to make the new religious paper appealing, interesting and instructive. The venture was young and healthy.

> Capital is often wasted for long on hopeless enterprises. The prospect of success is held out, and good money follows bad till the coffers are emptied. Unless a paper shows sign of promise and growth within six months after its start, it is as a rule hopeless to carry on.[3]

There were signs of promise and growth. The British Weekly in the beginning showed the qualities of success; those qualities attracted a following, and that following began to increase.

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1 London Mercury, July 7, 1923.
2 Darlow, op. cit., p. 312.
3 W. R. Nicoll, People and Books, p. 109.

CHAPTER V

William Robertson Nicoll: Editor

Nicoll's two dominating interests were literature and theology, and he, perhaps more than any other man of his time, built a bridge between the two. He wrote all kinds of "stuff," to use a journalistic term, but his heart was inevitably and almost entirely in religious journalism. He felt that the press had not yet awakened to its power or responsibility in that direction. At the time the British Weekly started, the Christian World was the great organ of Nonconformity, but it had a little leaning towards Unitarianism. Nicoll decided to express his truly orthodox views. He had a flair for plumbing the mind of his public, a flair unequalled in other editors. The success of the British Weekly after 1886 probably prevented the Christian World from becoming better known in Scotland, and led to the elimination of the well-conducted Christian Leader, in which its editor, the Rev. W. Howie Wylie, fought a losing battle. And the Scottish Review of Messrs. Nelson, which printed excellent material, never had a chance.

How closely Nicoll came to being connected with the Christian Leader instead of the British Weekly has caused some discussion. A letter by W. Pollock Wylie, son of the Rev. W. Howie Wylie, written to the Greenock Telegraph reads:

> It is also an interesting fact that before Mr. Nicoll resigned his ministry at Kelso my father visited him there, and suggested that the sphere of the "Christian Leader" - then a well-established paper - would be largely increased if Mr. Nicoll became its Scottish editor, and my father returned to London as editor-in-chief. The help of a great publishing house was to be obtained. Unfortunately Mr. Nicoll's health gave way. He went for a lengthened stay abroad,

> and on his return started the "British Weekly" himself on the lines indicated by my father to him at Kelso . . . .[1]

This letter was replied to in another paper by quoting a letter which Nicoll wrote about 1888.

> I cannot understand about the "Leader." Nearly two years ago on the editor's earnest and indeed imploring appeal I got Messrs, Hodder & Stoughton to offer to take it up. This fell through . . . . Before the "British Weekly" was started he (Rev. W. Howie Wylie) wrote me saying he was to bring the "Leader" to London and asking me to join in conducting it.[2]

Nicoll's biographers make no mention of this, although Darlow stated that Nicoll frequently contributed to a Glasgow weekly, the Christian Leader, and then quoted a letter written by the editor, Rev. W. Howie Wylie, which he wrote to Nicoll on January 3, 1883 (three years before the B.W. started). "Though I have no claim at all upon your kindness, you have really been more helpful to me than any other person in the world, and I have to thank you with all my heart."[3]

As editor of a religious newspaper, Nicoll had all the qualities essential to success. He had a sound basic knowledge and the desire to know. When it was decided to start the British Weekly, its editor made it his business to get into touch with journalists of every grade, and in this way obtained first-hand facts and technical knowledge. He was familiar with the capabilities or potentialities of many of his contemporaries in the Scottish Church to which he belonged, and as a lover of literature, he knew the persons who were likely to be helpful and who would attract the attention of the readers. Thus he secured as contributors Dr. Alexander Whyte, the venerable principal of the U. F. College,

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1 Greenock Telegraph, May 9, 1923.
2 Kilmarnock Standard, May 19, 1923.
3 Darlow, op. cit., p. 45.

Edinburgh, Dr. Marcus Dods, Principal Edwards of Aberystwyth, "Ian Maclaren," Miss Edith Simcox, Mr. J. M. Barrie, and Robert Louis Stevenson, who wrote in the B.W. on "Books which have Influenced me."

These signed articles by men in high position, Nicoll claimed, were hard to get from the men, and as he told Dods, "They have less influence on sales than one would suppose."[1] But the circulation grew mainly because of the way Nicoll handled his material. He appealed to the people by giving them religion, and culture and popular education.

Nicoll knew that a religious journal must first attract attention and then that attention must be held. He attracted it by his "Religious Census" and held it by drawing out the reports of the census so that they covered ten issues. The last three issues of the ten contained letters from public and church officials and general comments on the value of the census. In the ninth issue there had already been started a new attractive feature called, "Prosperous Churches and the Causes of Their Success." This was a series of ten articles, stretched out over fifteen issues, by omitting one now and then.

Besides the religious leader, the stories, the articles in series, and the correspondence, the contests perhaps maintained the greatest interest. The range was wide, allowing contestants the chance to state their favourite hymns, preachers, city or holiday resorts. The turnover was quick, as each contest only lasted two, or at most, three weeks; and the rewards were good, usually one guinea for first prize and ten shillings and sixpence for second. Some contests were for essays or opinions on a

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1 Letter from Nicoll to Dods, Darlow, op. cit., pp. 75 f. Hodder & Stoughton's records show that the sale of the British Weekly the week that R. L. Stevenson wrote "Books that have Influenced me" was 211 less than during the previous week.

subject, but they all served the purpose of sustaining interest.[1]

One fact stands out clearly to those who read those early issues, that the British Weekly had much of interest in it, and although the appeal was primarily to ministers,[2] there was much to attract general attention. The religious leaders of the first volume covered such varied subjects as: "Faith, Politics, and Culture," "The Present Position of the Temperance Movement," "The Temper of Science," "The Link between Wesley and Newman," "What Students Expect in a /Theological/ Professor," "What Are We to Believe about the Old Testament?" and "Our Case against the High Church Party." There were such feature series as: "The Religious Census," "How a Lady Earned Her Living by Literature," "Miss Doudney's Letter for Ladies," "Books Which Have Influenced Me," (by men of such calibre as Gladstone, Ruskin, and R. L. Stevenson) "Authors of the Day," "Editors of Today," "Tempted London" and continued stories by Sarah Doudney, Annie S. Swan and James Barrie.

Gradually the paper's circulation increased. Many prominent men praised it and a great quantity of unsolicited letters were printed in the B.W. as testimony to the paper's widening influence. The leading features began to take shape. Regular contributors appeared and stayed.

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1 At the close of the best preacher selection this notice was published: "We are compelled to postpone the award in this coupon. Nearly one thousand coupons have been received, and their examination is necessarily a work of considerable time and labour. A page will be devoted to it next week." B.W., March 11, 1887. However, it was not until the May 20th, 1887, issue that this list came out. The winners in order were Spurgeon, Dr. Parker and Canon Liddon.

2 Nicoll stated in the beginning, that the B.W. was aimed to interest ministers first. See Letter to Macniven, Nov. 9, 1886, in Darlow, op. cit., p. 73.

Marcus Dods was there from the first. Annie S. Swan's[1] first article appeared in the May 6th, 1887, issue in the form of the first chapter of her novel, "Doris Cheyne: The Story of a Noble Life." Jane T. Stoddart had her first B.W. contribution published in the September 9th, 1887, issue. It was a small paragraph entitled "A Good Congregational Layman," an obituary, signed simply "S."[2] After due publicity, although he was still an "unknown," James M. Barrie made his debut in July 15th, 1887, with an article called "Professor John Stuart Blackie" and signed "Gavin Ogilvy." Thus Nicoll began to gather round him those who were to add so much to the success and fame of William Robertson Nicoll and the British Weekly.

The paper, at first, never exceeded twenty pages, but most often it stayed at its minimum of sixteen. The first enlargement came with the forty-ninth issue.[3] This enlargement was in the form of a four-page supplement. Supplements appeared periodically until the B.W. was permanently enlarged to one-fourth of its original size in the issue of October 5th, 1888. With the beginning of the second volume, Nicoll introduced consecutive numbering into the paper, making the subsequent issuing of it in volumes a thing of more permanent value.

Two important features which should be mentioned were introduced before the end of the British Weekly's first year. One was the series of articles called "Tempted London." This was advertised in a leader with the same title, the first paragraph of which read:

> We propose to commence this day fortnight the publication of a series of articles under this title, which will deal with the lives

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1 Mrs. Annie Burnett-Smith. She married in 1883 the doctor who was to become Nicoll's personal physician.

2 Four years later she became Nicoll's assistant-editor, a position she held, under his editorship, until his death.

3 October 7, 1887, the same issue in which Barrie's story "When a Man's Single" began.

> of the young men and young women employed in the City of London and its neighbourhood. All London is tempted, like the rest of the world; but at no point, perhaps, is the Tempter in all his forms more active than here.[1]

This salient survey was undertaken by a staff of capable contributors who collected the facts. It attracted considerable attention, as the letters to the editor testify, and inasmuch as it was spread out over a period of well over a year (later being published in book form) it helped circulation considerably.

The other feature, of probably greater importance in the long run, was the beginning of Nicoll's column, "The Correspondence of Claudius Clear." This appeared on October 28th, 1887, the fifty-second issue,[2] and was destined to make him well-known throughout Great Britain and America. He believed that a good title was half the work of writing the article or making the sermon so he took pains in selecting "Claudius Clear." He went to the British Museum where he searched the obituary columns of the European Magazine. It was here that he found the life-record of a Claudius Clear, a name which appealed to him so much that he retained it for the signature of his proposed correspondence. "His intention was not to write regularly, but to get friends to write to him, and this plan was carried out to some extent, Mr. Taylor Innes, Mr. Logie Robertson and others taking part."[3] Nicoll found this difficult to manage so he took over the writing himself, which continued until he died. He developed this column into weekly essays of great literary, ethical and religious merit. There was nothing particularly deep or subtle or clever

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1 B.W., September 23, 1887.
2 Not the fifty-first issue as Stoddart's biography claims, p. 78.
3 J.T. Stoddart, W. Robertson Nicoll, (London: Partridge & Co., 1903), p. 78

about these comments, but their clearness and simplicity and the common-sense precepts inculcated won him the deep regard and adherence to his principles of thousands of readers. A fertile mind, stored with the fruits of wide reading in theology, philosophy and literature, stood him in good stead in his task of producing week by week these musings on the world. They gave vent to the other side of Nicoll which could no appropriately be put in his articles. In "Claudius Clear" he expressed himself most intimately with a perfected essayist's touch, while on the first page of the B.W. he often wrote in the language of personal faith concerning the deeper things of life and death and eternity. Thus he wrote to a friend in 1888, "You get all that I am thinking in my articles, and all that I am doing in 'Claudius Clear,' so I have no news at all."[1] In the same letter he commented that the B.W. had "increased since the new year about 5,000 copies weekly, and I expect will soon reach its limit. Now that it is paying, I think of other things . . . ."[2]

After Nicoll left Kelso for London he moved to a home in Norwood near the old Crystal Palace. But this was to be a place of sad memories for him, for on November 25th, 1888, his eight-months-old son, Louis Dunlop, died. The family moved in March, 1889, to Bay Tree Lodge, Frognal, Hampstead, where Robertson Nicoll spent the rest of his life.

The British Weekly was by now well enough organised to allow Nicoll's attention to be directed to other projects. The prolific W.R.N. was never satisfied with one project at a time. In his early preaching days he had also written for papers, had addresses, sermons and

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1 Letter, Nicoll to McRobbie, March 10, 1888. Quoted from Darlow, op. cit., p. 85.
2 Ibid.

poems published in collections, and he had even edited journals and series of books. So by the time he had become editor of the B.W. he had had published a life of Jesus Christ,[1] a collection of poems,[2] four books of addresses and sermons,[3] a work on Tennyson,[4] and he had edited a series of translations,[5] and two magazines.[6] In 1887, he edited a series for Hodder and Stoughton called the Theological Educator. This was a series of fourteen manuals, "intended to give a solid and trustworthy grounding in all branches of Theological study."[7] The same year a new venture was projected. This was a series called The Expositor's Bible. In his announcement of it Nicoll said that it would contain a complete set of expository lectures on the Bible by the foremost preachers and theologians of the day. "While scholarly the volumes will be essentially popular. With one or two exceptions they will be absolutely new, not having appeared in magazine or book form. Six volumes will be published annually . . ."[8] This series ran into forty-eight volumes, the last series being published 1895-96. Prior to its production there were critical commentaries in plenty, keen, scholarly, but often excessively analytical and disconnected, devoid of the flow and flavour of literature, books meant for the

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1 The Incarnate Saviour, 1881. In 1902 this book was translated into Japanese and published in Tokyo. In 1913 the Christian Literature Society for China, had it translated into Chinese and published it in Shanghai.

2 Songs of Rest, 1879.

3 Reasons For Belonging To The Free Church, 1874; Calls to Christ, 1877; The Lamb of God, 1883; "John Bunyan," a lecture published with others in The Evangelical Succession, 1884.

4 Tennyson by "Walter E. Wace" [Nicoll] 1881.

5 The Foreign Biblical Library, 1886.

6 The Contemporary Pulpit which lived from 1884-1894, and the Expositor which he edited from 1885 until his death.

7 From an advertisement in B.W., August 19, 1887.

8 B.W., September 30, 1887.

critical theologian. There were also sermons in plenty. But preachers worth the name preferred to make their own sermons. What was needed was a creation which should stand half-way between the critical commentary proper and the sermon, and be at once a critical and searching exposition, and a book possessing continuity, readableness, warmth, life, style, and all the best qualities of literature. The Expositor's Bible met this need. In 1890, Nicoll had two books published. One was a biography he had written, called James Macdonell, Journalist, "perhaps the only life of a journalist pure and simple ever written."[1] The other book he edited jointly with A. N. Macnicoll. It was entitled Life of Professor W. G. Elmslie, D.D.: Memoir and Sermons. This same year an honour was bestowed upon Robertson Nicoll in the form of the degree of LL.D.. It was conferred by his Alma Mater, the University of Aberdeen. The first Mrs. Nicoll wrote in her diary: "This honour is all the greater as it was in no way solicited. Three professors had his name on their lists."[2]

In the following year, October, 1891, the eighty-year-old Rev. Harry Nicoll, W.R.N.'s father, died at the Old Manse, Lumsden. For the last few years of his life he had had an assistant living with him who had completely relieved him of all pastoral duties, but he had preached occasionally and he remained happy, eagerly buying and reading books, to the very end. When they told him that he was dying, he said simply, "It is a solemn thing," then joined in repeating the twenty-third Psalm and said no more.[3]

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1 W.R. Nicoll, James Macdonell, Journalist, (London: Hodder & Stoughton, 1890), Preface.
2 Quoted in Darlow, op. cit., p. 92.
3 W.R. Nicoll, My Father, pp. 100 f.

For some years Nicoll had fostered the idea of a periodical, along popular lines, devoted entirely to literature. Finally he found time to carry out this venture, and on September 10, 1891, a detailed prospectus of this new literary magazine called the Bookman appeared.[1] This prospectus announced that the new monthly's aims were: to interest all connected with books; to be thoroughly readable; to be unusually complete and fresh in news; and to supply prompt, unprejudiced, and competent criticism of new books. It also planned to contain literary gossip from all parts of the world as well as miscellaneous literary articles, and among other features there was to be a "Young Author's Page." The first number of the Bookman, the October issue, appeared on September 25th, 1891.[2] The Bookman, even more than the British Weekly, gave Nicoll the opportunity to give full scope to his ideas concerning popular journalism.

> In order that a magazine may succeed nowadays . . . it is necessary that it should be easily read. It should contain short articles which are largely personal. It must be freely illustrated, and must contain matter which cannot be found elsewhere. It must, in fact, possess some character and saliency of its own.[3]

In 1892, the British Weekly was again enlarged, this time to a five column sheet. In the issue of September 29th, 1892, Nicoll anannounced this new change:

> Through the generosity and patience of our readers we have been able to make steady progress, seldom very rapid, but never broken by any period of retrogression. The paper has been three times

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1 He took the name from James Russell Lowell's slogan, "I am a Bookman."

2 Not November 1st as in Stoddart, op. cit., p. 91. For adverse criticism see: Lloyds, October 4, 1891; Methodist Herald, September 26, 1891; Sunday Sun, September 28, 1891; Glasgow Evening News, September 26, 1891. For favourable reviews see: Liverpool Daily Post, October 29, 1891; Nottingham Express, September 28, 1891; Speaker, October 3, 1891; Methodist Recorder, October 6, 1891; Review of Reviews, October, 1891; Baptist Magazine, December, 1891.

3 From an interview with Nicoll in the Sunday Magazine, November 27, 1897.

> enlarged, now it will be enlarged for the fourth time, and will take rank with the largest journals of the kind in the world.[1]

The October 9th issue introduced the new size. Of this, one paper said that,

> /The British Weekly/ commences a new era with the current issue, enlarging its size and adding some new features which will still more increase its usefulness and popularity. It is far and away the best religious weekly, if we look at the high tone of its leading articles, and the absence of any trace of bitterness so often found alas! in religious papers.[2]

Nicoll continued his appeals to the "bargain spirit" by offering to each purchaser of six copies of the October 9th issue a copy of "The British Weekly Album," which contained portraits of some of its contributors, including Barrie, "Amica," and the editor himself. Nicoll knew human nature well enough to know that the purchasers' extra five copies would not be thrown away after the coupons were clipped but in all probability would be passed on to persons who had not purchased, and maybe never seen, the B.W..

The Expositor, under Nicoll, was steadily plodding on, fulfilling a need, and maintaining its status. Near the end of 1891, the editor was surprised to discover that more of it sold in volumes than in single numbers. "It is a continual source of amazement to me that it does not diminish. When the last series was offered cheap, we sold 1,500 sets (= 15,000 volumes) in a month or so. The vast majority of our readers are Episcopalians."[3]

Two years, almost to the day, after the Bookman was issued, Dr. Nicoll projected a new enterprise in the journalistic world. He had

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1 B.W., September 29, 1892.
2 Cumberland Advertiser, October 11, 1892.
3 Letter from Nicoll to Dods, September 28, 1891, quoted in Darlow, op. cit., p. 100.

thought for many years that there was a large place in journalism for women. In an interview he had stated that he thought that the journalism of the future would be largely in their hands. "I am not sure how they will do as chief editors, with a policy to dictate but as subordinates they are admirable."[1] Nicoll added that until then there had been no great woman editor. He had already made large use of women journalists; his chief assistants, both on the British Weekly and the Bookman, were and "he is convinced that journalism is a profession into which the girl graduate and her sisters are bound to press with more and more insistence and success."[2] This new venture, to be called the Woman at Home, was to supply women with a monthly illustrated magazine on the newest lines so it was only natural that Nicoll should turn to women journalists to help him. Ten years later he wrote how he had conceived the notion of publishing the Woman at Home as a Strand Magazine type periodical expressly for ladies.

> I was anxious to secure the services of a well-known lady writer whose contributions would be in a manner editorial, dealing with the questions and difficulties of a woman's life. Mrs. Burnett Smith, so widely known as Annie S. Swan . . . on my invitation consented to take a large and continuous part of the writing of the magazine. She has fulfilled this work to the great pleasure of the readers all these years. The work of editing, however, has been mainly done by Miss Jane T. Stoddart, who has very actively co-operated with me from the beginning. To Miss Stoddart's fertility of ideas, steady application, and complete mastery of all the details of journalism, the magazine owes the greatest possible debt.[3]

The new publication was announced in the B.W. September 14, 1893, and the first number appeared the following week, September 20th. "From the start the magazine has been eminently successful. The sale of the

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1 Interview with "P.L.P.," East Anglian Daily Times, April 15, 1895.

2 Kelso Mail, August 17, 1892.

3 W.R. Nicoll, "Ten Years of 'The Woman at Home,'" Woman at Home, October, 1913.

first number was unprecedently large for a periodical of the kind."[1] Nicoll wrote his friend Dods that it was "a kind of female Strand, but with a religious tone, though not a Sunday magazine. It is not at all literary but I will endeavour to have one of the stories each month by a good author."[2] He told Dods that every detail of the magazine had been planned and supervised by himself, but that after the first three months or so he expected to have little to do with it, turning it all over to the staff of the magazine. He reckoned that it was necessary to sell at least 30,000. "If it is a failure, I shall make no more attempts to catch the masses. The pictures have worried me almost out of my senses, but I daresay all will come right."[3] The paper not only flourished but became one of the great popular magazines.

And yet within a few short years another monthly was to be started by the author of the British Weekly. This was a religious magazine which Nicoll called the British Monthly with the sub-title, a "record of religious life and work." The first number was issued November 20, 1900. In shape it was quite unlike the ordinary magazine, being about the same size as the Bookman, and the first issue of the British Weekly. Its design was quite unique, and took a position no previously existing monthly occupied, with a dash of the B.W., in its blend of Nonconformity and Literature, but with more space for the interests of religious life and work and a special vein of gossip about the clergy. The opening number was fortunate in having a leading historic subject to describe and illustrate. It was the union of the Free Church and the United Presbyterian Church

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1 Ibid.
2 Letter from Nicoll to Dods, July 29, 1893, quoted in Darlow, op. cit., p. 112.
3 Ibid.

which many thought to be the greatest event of the religious world in the closing years of the nineteenth century. This was profusely illustrated and included in the magazine as a supplement. There were innumerable illustrations throughout the whole issue, including the red stiff paper cover which had an artistic drawing of St. Paul's Cathedral by Mr. Hedley Tilton. Included in the issue were two or three short stories, two or three sermonettes, a little about books, a children's corner, and two or three articles by Nicoll himself.[1] This new periodical was well received in the journalistic world. Some comments were: "After a glance at this magazine it seems strange that the idea of publishing such a record of the doings of religious bodies and religious people has not occurred to some one before;"[2] and, "As an illustrated record of religious life and work, the first number is very promising, and those who get the first will certainly want the second,"[3] and "There is plenty of that ecclesiastical small talk which ministers delight to turn over with each other in their studies on a Monday afternoon, and several short stories by writers like David Lyall and Miss Mary Wilkins which a modern magazine requires,"[4] and, "Dr. Nicoll knows his public."[5] "One cannot help seeing, even at a glance, that the aim is to do the work for God and the Churches thoroughly well. There is no narrowness or exclusiveness about it. We wish the "British Monthly" long life. . ."[6]

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1 There is a curious printer's error in Nicoll's quotation of a line by Tennyson, "God's finger touched him and he slept." It appears as "God's finger touched him and he slipped."

2 Sheffield Independent, December 5, 1900.

3 Primitive Methodist World, November 22, 1900.

4 Dundee Evening Post, November 21, 1900.

5 The Outlook, November 24, 1900.

6 The Methodist Times and the Methodist Recorder, November 22, 1900.

Although Robertson Nicoll was never robust, he was a veritable glutton for work. In spite of chronic ill health and frequent illness he was an indomitable worker. His powers of work were enormous. How a man with such a delicate body, susceptible to the east winds, could accomplish so much was a marvel to many. He claimed that his only salvation was to keep in a rut. His rut was a well-ordered routine. He was master of his time. Most of his work was done at home. He worked at home every day but Wednesday, "and his work continually increased. Punctuality was essential. Assistants and secretaries were coming and going and their time was of value. We knew the day of the week by that day's programme."[1]

By eleven o'clock sharp on Monday the library of Bay Tree Lodge had to be ready with the fire lit. This fire was lighted throughout the year even sometimes on the hottest of days. Nicoll's secretary, Miss Coe, and his assistant editor, Miss Stoddart, arrived promptly with papers and letters and bundles of manuscripts from the office. They worked in the library from eleven until two, at which time they all had lunch. On Monday afternoons he prepared his literary columns, having tea with his family at five. Monday evenings were devoted to dictating his three-column "Claudius Clear" letter. Tuesday was the most exacting day of the week. In the evening Nicoll thought out and composed the B.W.'s weekly leader. Wednesday was his field-day. At eleven he went off to the city, for on that morning the British Weekly was put to bed, that is, the editor made the weekly pilgrimage to his printers, Hazell, Watson and Viney. In the company of Hodder (or in later days Hodder's grandson, Hodder-Williams) W.R.N. gave a final review to the forms as

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1 C. Robertson Nicoll, Under the Bay Tree, (For private circulation only), 1934, pp. 23 f.

they were locked up ready for the presses. Then came luncheon with his publishers and some of his chosen cronies at the Devonshire Club in St. James's Street or the Reform Club in Pall Mall, or at the Bath Club. Often these luncheon-conversations lasted for two hours or more. Afterwards he often relaxed in a Turkish Bath. Thursday was a day of rest, when Nicoll would stay in bed until early afternoon. He read voluminously while in bed. Before tea he would usually walk on the Heath with his wife. This was the only exercise he ever indulged in. Friday was another day in town but not at his office. It was a literary day for him. He met literary people of all kinds at his Club, and as a rule visited bookshops and bookmen on the way home. Part of the secret of his enormous output was that he made it a point to meet well-informed people. On Saturday mornings he stayed in bed all morning but spent his time writing. Often on Friday and Saturday afternoons he could be found in the reading room of the British Museum gathering material for his many journalistic contributions. On Sundays he went to church, not to a fashionable church, but usually to some small Nonconformist place of worship. In strange towns he sought them out, the Primitive Methodists, the Strict Baptists, or the Bible Christians. Very often he wrote about these visits in Claudius Clear and in his other articles.[1]

This was Nicoll's usual week, almost unvarying, throughout his life in London. Even when on holiday in his native village of Lumsden or on his annual trip abroad he was seldom completely free from his work.

> He came every summer [to Lumsden] for one or two months' holiday, . . . but he had his work prepared beforehand, and his articles written for the first month. The editorial work for the second

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1 Based on Lady Nicoll's account of a week at Hampstead in C.R. Nicoll, op. cit., p. 24.

part of his holiday time was done in his "den" that contained the largest part of his father's library of 17,000 books in the Old Manse.[1]

He rested his body, but very seldom, except when he was sleeping, did he rest his mind. A great part of his writing was done while he lay in bed surrounded by papers, letters, manuscripts, and always a cat or two, an animal for which he had a deep affection and attraction. "If a journalist's exports exceed his imports," he once told Lord Riddell, "he will soon be a literary bankrupt."[2] Nicoll's weekly exports were enormous. He wrote not only for all of his own publications but for others as well and quantities of reviews for daily papers, but in pursuance of his principles he devoted two days a week to reading.

Nicoll's "import" of reading was one of the secrets of his great "export." He read much in the files of old newspapers and magazines. He habitually ran over a large number of the morning papers after breakfast. All of these newspapers that came into his home were kept for a fortnight for future reference. They were stacked in convenient places. Concerning these piles Mrs. Nicoll writes, "As my husband received all the London dailies and many of the Scottish and provincial, all the evening papers, and most of the weeklies both literary and religious, including the American, these files became enormous and were referred to as "the haystacks."[3] To a certain degree Nicoll expected a like knowledge of contemporary papers from his staff.[4] Besides the periodi-

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1 "J.C.," "William Robertson Nicoll," Aberdeen Journal, May 8, 1923.

2 Lord Riddell, More Pages from My Diary, (London: Country Life Ltd., 1934,)p. 61

3 His assistant editor relates that, "a perfect knowledge of the week's issue of the Christian World was expected by "W.R.N." from his staff. . . . We were taught that its contents should be mastered before lunch on Thursdays, and if possible before breakfast. Ignorance was no more excusable than if a tradesman on one side of the street were indifferent to what his rival on the opposite side was doing. J.T. Stoddart, "Our Contemporaries," B.W., November 12, 1936.

cals, his day often included reading two new novels, a sermon by Spurgeon, many MSS, besides rereading many of his "old friends." Pages and pages of Dickens and Scott he knew by heart. His weekly budget of letters averaged three to four hundred.

But Nicoll's ability to read all of the newspapers, books and manuscripts that he did, lay in his developing a phenomenal speed in his reading. He estimated that the vast majority read an ordinary story at the rate of from 8,000 to 9,000 words in half an hour. Some he felt fell considerably below this, "as low as 4,000 words in half an hour while others might exceed it," but in no case had he had more than 12,000 words mentioned.

> I have made various personal experiments, and find that I can read where there is no occasion for halting, about 20,000 words in half an hour. Last night I tried with Shirley Brook's Sooner or Later, and read faster than that, but as I know the book very well, the experiment was scarcely a fair one. Dialect books one reads more slowly.[1]

That amounts to almost 1,000 words a mimute or an ordinary novel in a little over two hours.[2] Many people believe that books read rapidly cannot be read thoroughly. But Nicoll, "was always ready to stand an examination on the subject matter of any book he read, and indeed was admirable in the way of giving the contents of a book in the fewest possible words."[3]

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1 Claudius Clear /W.R.N./ B.W., October 14, 1897.

2 Many others have been able to read as fast. Prof. Adams wrote that George Saintsbury could read as rapidly. Adams also say, "there is a professor in Ireland who reads at a rate that would exhaust the "Paradise Lost" in less than half an hour." John Adams, "Twenty Years of 'Twasome Cracks'," Christian World, May 25, 1923. The editor of the Congregational Quarterly(January, 1945) in a leader tells of the editor of the past who would, "devour books of all kinds . . . . And his habit of taking six books to bed with him and coming down in the morning with the reviews written has passed into history - or is it legend?"

3 Professor John Adams, op. cit.

Having many duties made him eager to save time and his greatest time-saver was by the use of dictation. The result was that he could pour out almost every week an amount of "copy" which staggers the ordinary writing man. "For a number of years I have been accustomed to dictate everything, and if you once fall into this way you lose the power of handwriting. If your shorthand writer takes a holiday - a thing which ought to be prevented by every available means - the burden of existence becomes intolerable."[1] He had warned young journalists that if they could not write a thousand words fit for print in an hour then he should choose some other profession. With dictation Nicoll could far surpass this criterion.

> I find, working six days a week and taking one clear holiday, that I can do with perfect ease from 15,000 to 18,000 words a week. But when the week is cut up in any way I find it enough to do from 10,000 to 12,000. This is not a despicable quantity when you remember that it means the average production of nearly a million words a year, or ten good-sized volumes . . . . What is most necessary for the regular production of average work is a contented and peaceful mind.[2]

An account of Nicoll's ability to perform the duties of a journalist to the utmost has been recorded by a fellow journalist, who helped Nicoll to edit the Bookman. He tells how the able and much experienced journalist, William Sutherland, who had seen almost everything of any interest in a journalistic world and who could not be surprised by even the more than ordinary journalistic efficiency, was surprised one day by a display of Dr. Nicoll's ability. It was during the great Tariff Reform struggle. Mr. Sutherland was working on the Daily Chronicle and related an incident which filled him with admiration.

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1 Claudius Clear, B.W., April 15, 1897.
2 Ibid.

> It had been arranged that Dr. Nicoll should call at the Chronicle office after a big meeting and write an article on the whole business for next morning's paper. He drove up near half-past eleven, and I met him on the stairs carrying a bunch of Blue Books under his arm, and looking almost too frail to be fit for work. "Can I have a stenographer?" he asked, "I am going on somewhere else and can't spare more than twenty minutes." No shorthand writer was available at the moment, so I took him to my room, and said I would take down for him myself. He dropped into an armchair, turning over the Blue Books, and I was barely seated when he began to dictate. He went on in a low, even voice, without a break, touching in statistics from the Blue Books as they were needed, and never hesitating for a fact or a word till he was done. As he said the last word he got up, tucking the Blue Books under his arm, said in his subdued, Doric accents, "Thank you Mr. Sutherland. Do you mind correcting the proof for me?" And was gone before his twenty minutes were over. It was a masterly little article, concise, clear, closely reasoned, on a complicated, controversial, highly technical subject, and there was no necessity for him even to hear it read over after it was dictated. He is the perfect journalist.[1]

Some of the events in Nicoll's career had such an influence upon his life and writings that they must be mentioned. Just before the close of the century, in June, 1894, a severe blow came to Nicoll. During the previous November Mrs. Nicoll had been subjected to an operation from which she had recuperated enough to spend Christmas with her children. She had a relapse during the first of the year and spent Easter in bed at her home. She rallied, but grave symptoms set in which necessitated a further operation. From this operation she never recovered. She died on June 2, 1894, at the age of thirty-six. It was undoubtedly this sad experience out of which grew the sad little book, The Key of the Grave published the same year. It was a thin book of meditations concerning his belief in immortality. From the depths of his own experience he eased the mourning hearts of others, and "of all his writings none has been more dear and sacred in the homes which sorrow has visited."[2]

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1 A. St.John Adcock, "William Robertson Nicoll," Bookman, June, 1923.

2 Stoddart, op. cit., p. 97.

On September 26, 1896, the Campania sailed from Liverpool for the United States with William Robertson Nicoll and Mr. and Mrs. J. M. Barrie included among her passengers. Nicoll wrote a series of letters which were published in the British Weekly giving his impressions of his trip. He and Mr. Barrie were given a warm reception in the literary circles of New York and Boston. They visited all of the leading publishing houses, and met such magazine founders as Frank Munsay and S. S. McClure. He made a point of seeing some of the old-world towns of New England, and the homes and birthplaces of such people as Henry Ward Beecher, G. W. Cable, Jonathan Edwards, Ralph Waldo Emerson, Oliver Wendell Holmes, Henry James, Longfellow, Lowell, Hawthorne, and many others. He even took a quick trip to New Orleans, but by November 14, 1896, Nicoll was at home again in Hampstead.

On his return from abroad he enlarged his library at Bay Tree Lodge by building a new room, long and narrow, which would make room for 25,000 books. Previously the books had been scattered all over the house. Now he had a study. Of this library one journalist wrote that,

> No visitor to that remarkable chamber will forget its long vistas of crowded bookcases projecting into a floor littered with piles of volumes, between which a narrow winding track led on to the armchair of the owner, dimly seen in a cloud of tobacco smoke by the fire. You had the uncanny sense of a vampire brain crouching in its corner, having sucked the life blood of countless books and half the souls of their authors. His memory was preternatural, he knew every volume and where to get it and almost the page on which the needed reference lurked.[1]

There was little order to the books; no index; no arrangement. S. R. Crockett writing in the Bookman said of it,

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1 Times, May 10, 1923.

> It is indeed a library, if shape it may be called, that shape hath none. There are, true it is, many books, but no two books upon a kindred subject ever stand together. I find the first volume of "Shirley" on the shelf by the fire, ready to my hand, but the second is in the coal-cellar - and as for the third, ask of the wanton, wandering winds.[1]

Nicoll believed that books were the furniture of a library, and that no bother should be made about the appearance of the floors or bookcases. The floors should be stained and covered with rugs. He wrote of his library that,

> It contains from 23,000 to 25,000 volumes. They are everywhere. The shelves are full and the floor is crowded. There is a lane from the door to the fireplace, a length of fifty-one feet, but it is narrow and is narrowing. The library is only a journalist's library. There are no rare books in the number,[2] and if the whole were sold by auction the results would be disappointing. Nevertheless, to me the collection means something. It has been accumulated in the course of years in obedience to various impulses, and at one time or another almost every volume in it has possessed a certain significance. It contains a few special collections made with the view of writing on certain subjects.[3]

Among his special collections were complete sets bound and indexed, of several of the more important magazines and weekly journals which he claimed contained the history of the last fifty years as it could be found nowhere else. Of Nicoll's bibliophilism, J. M. Barrie, his friend, said that W.R.N. appeared eager to crowd himself out of his library.

> He never believed there was a sufficiency of books in that vast apartment; he was, perhaps, the only man in the world who thought that more people whould write books; he considered that the next best thing to a good book was a bad book. He was so fond of books that I am sure he never saw a lonely one without wanting to pat it and give it sixpence. I should say that he read thousands of them

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1 Quoted in Stoddart, on. cit., pp. 114 f.

2 He overlooked one or two exceptions, e.g., the one and only MS of James Barrie's The Little Minister.

3 Claudius Clear, B.W., April 29, 1915. After Nicoll's death this work library of "tools," most well-used, dog-eared and permeated with tobacco ashes, auctioned for not much over £ 1,000 when 20,000 of his books were sold. Nicoll never marked his books, but turned down a corner of the page as he was able to tell at a glance where the important passage was.

> every year of his life, and as quickly as you or I may gather blackberries. He had not the slightest interest in science, but would have been interested in it at last if it could have shown him how to treat his eyes so that he could read two books at once; he grudged two eyes to one book.[1]

It was fortunate that Nicoll possessed, in addition to his father's instinct for acquirement, his own instinct for impartation. It would have been a loss to the Church and the world if he had been simply Harry Nicoll over again. His "exports" matched his "imports."

William Robertson Nicoll had had his share of bereavement and suffering. Since 1885, the year of his near fatal illness, he had lost, not only his wife and son but his brother, sister, father and mother-in-law. He had been forced out of the profession which, to him, was his true calling. But after a dozen such dark years, in 1897, the year of Queen Victoria's Diamond Jubilee, the clouds seemed to part and the warm brightness of happier days appeared. He was forty-five years old, and had attained an influential position in journalism, in literature, and in theology. He was an important person and his health had improved to the point where he could accept occasional speaking engagements.

For the following fifteen years he was active in the pulpit and platform as a public man and church leader, no less than as writer and editor.

On May 1, 1897, there occurred a wedding which aroused a great deal of interest.

> /The marriage was/ at the picturesque old Parish Church of Shillington (where the bride's father has been vicar's churchwarden for a great many years) between Miss Catherine Pollard, fourth daughter of Mr. Joseph Pollard, of High Down, Hitchin and Mr. William Robertson Nicoll, LL.D..[2]

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1 J. M. Barrie, "Personal Tributes," B.W., May 10, 1923.
2 The Hertfordshire, May 8, 1897.

This marriage was the beginning of a new era, not only for Nicoll himself, but for his two children. From 1897 until 1918 were the years of Nicoll's greatest power and influence, the crowning years of his career. One of the stars in his crown was a daughter born October 20, 1898. It was from this time on that W.R.N. and his wife, and often the children began their almost yearly trips to the continent, spending the majority of their visits on the Riviera coast. This was besides the annual summer holiday spent at the Old Manse, Lumsden.[1]

If Nicoll preached efficiency he just as ardently expounded the "Sin of Over-Work,"[2] "The Art of Conversation,"[3] "Melted Down for the Tallow Trade,"[4] and many other treatises on the necessity for and the use of leisure. His acquaintances in their memoirs, mention that he was a splendid listener; one who could listen for hours. "I am thinking, however, of the best kind of conversation, the conversation between two people; what the Scotch call a twa-handed crack. This is almost the culmination of human happiness when it is at its best. Two are company, three are none."[5] He disliked people who watched the clock. He said that he liked nothing better than the visitor who could relax by the fire and could have his conversation out, and could take time to trim the lamp of friendship. Nicoll's talk unvaryingly centred on the three subjects which most interested him - religion, literature and politics.

> I never met anyone who knew his own subjects better or was more entirely incurious about everything outside them. Most men of first-rate ability, if they are not much interested, let us say, in art, science, music, archaeology, or sport, acquire a smattering of knowledge about them for conversational purposes, or at

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1 Complete accounts of these trips are given by his wife in, C.R. Nicoll, Under the Bay Tree, passim.
2 Claudius Clear, Letters on Life, p. 121.
3 Ibid, p. 25.
4 Claudius Clear, The Daybook of Claudius Clear, p. 262.
5 Claudius Clear, "The Art of Conversation," Letters on Life, pp.30f.

> least will ask questions about them. But Nicoll used to say quite frankly that he knew nothing of these themes, was not interested in them, and declined to talk about them . . . . Soon it became a recognised custom that I should drop in on Saturday nights for a long talk.[1]

What he knew in the large realm of his own world he knew thoroughly and therefore attracted to him great numbers of well-known men in the fields of religion, literature and politics. A survey of those elect who became regular visitors to Nicoll's "Den" produces a list that is awesome. Not only did W.R.N. gain much information by these conversations with people of knowledge, but as years came and went the list of those who were regular visitors grew; as one regular visitor moved away another replaced him. So there were many who claimed this privilege. Dr. Sir John Adams (Professor of Education in London University) wrote that, "His ideal was what he called in the old Scots phrase 'a twasome crack.' It was because of this desire that I go into the way, some score of years ago, of going up to his house at Hampstead on Sunday nights. Gradually it got to be a confirmed habit . . . ."[2] Mr. W. Pett Ridge said, "I cannot reckon the number of Sunday evenings I spent in his company at Bay Tree Lodge, but they went on for years, and . . . I was never allowed to go until close upon one o'clock in the morning."[3] "Mr. William Canton was a regular visitor . . . on Saturday evenings or my husband would go to him. He had been sub-editor of the Glasgow Herald and of the Contemporary Review."[4] Dr. John Watson ("Ian Maclaren")

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1 The Rev. Canon Anthony C. Deane, "Literature and Life - William Robertson Nicoll," B.W., August 7, 1930. This curious fact is borne out in that after his death the B.W. began to add columns on music and art, subjects which had never been included before.

2 John Adams, "Twenty Years of 'Twasome Cracks," Christian World, May 25, 1923.

3 W. Pett Ridge, Bookman, June, 1923.

4 C.R. Nicoll, op. cit., p. 75.

was another frequent visitor, "always very welcome, always full of energy and fun."[1] Mr. Max Pemberton stated that, "for some years I used to spend Saturday afternoons at his bedside."[2] Mr. St.John Adcock, Nicoll's assistant and later editor of the Bookman, wrote, "He had two free evenings - Saturday and Sunday - and liked nothing better than to have a friend sitting on the other side of the fire-place talking the hours away . . . and for the following three or four years . . . I passed every Sunday evening in his company."[3] He went on to say that he would arrive between eight and nine and rarely get away before one or two next morning. "Very eagerly," wrote Clement Shorter, the author, "did I look forward to our regular Friday meeting, at which we talked eternally on books old and new."[4] The Rev. T. Herbert Darlow, who became Nicoll's biographer, "came to Bay Tree Lodge at tea time every Thursday, my husband's free day, and spent an hour or two with him . . . these regular weekly talks extending over thirty years.[5] These visitors were in addition to the friends he used to meet every Wednesday at his club. "Nicoll knew all about true friendship. He was intensely loyal to the many people he loved."[6]

As time passed his influence grew, honours multiplied, and his name became widely known. In 1909, he was made a Knight-Bachelor, by King Edward VII. On his seventieth birthday, 1921, he was honoured by a celebration at the House of Commons, when Mr. Lloyd George wrote, "I hold Sir William in very high esteem. The clarion note of his leadership

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1 Ibid, p. 78.
2 Max Pemberton, Bookman, June, 1923.
3 St.John Adcock, Bookman, June, 1923.
4 Clement Shorter, "More Personal Tributes," B.W., May 10, 1923.
5 C.R. Nicoll, op. cit., p. 79.
6 Private letter to the writer from Mr. Nicoll's daughter, Mrs. C. Miles.

has rallied the ranks of Nonconformity to the support of great humanitarian causes throughout his long and distinguished career as editor and publicist."[1] On the King's birthday in 1921, he received the Companionship of Honour at Buckingham Palace. The Motto of this order is, "In action faithful and in honour clear." He had the degree of D.D. conferred on him by the University of Halifax and in May, 1922, Sir James Barrie became Rector of St. Andrew's University. At the same graduation ceremony, Nicoll received the honorary LL.D. degree, in absentia.

His health had been failing considerably, and the end of his long, well-filled life came on the afternoon of May 4th, 1923, at his London residence, Bay Tree Lodge, Hampstead.

It has rightly been said of him that he was the keeper of the literary conscience of Nonconformity. He was, indeed, the soundest exponent of Nonconformist thought in the literary and political fields. His judgment was widely accepted as final, and the vigour and authority of his writings gave the British Weekly exceptional influence. With his passing, British journalism suffered an irreparable loss.

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1 Quoted in the Daily Chronicle, May 5, 1923.

CHAPTER VI

The British Weekly: Religion, Politics, and Social Issues

It was given to few men to express the Nonconformity of public affairs for so long as Robertson Nicoll. But it must be remembered that politics were a matter of course with ministers at the turn of the century. It had been a part of their domain, although they were beginning to wonder just what part it should play. Some of the first leaders in the British Weekly discussed this very question.[1] Some were entitled, "Christianity and Politics," "Liberalism, the Christianity of Politics," and "Faith, Politics, and Culture." The latter was written by Nicoll himself and clearly stated his views upon the subject. "We believe that between faith and politics on the one hand, and between faith and culture on the other, there ought to be the most intimate and friendly relations."[2] He went on to say:

> Let politics alone, say some Christians; faith has nothing to do with such earthly subjects. If so, there has been a change since the time of the Hebrew prophets, to whom, as someone said, God was almost politically revealed, and when such sense of public duty as existed at all was usually a direct offshoot of religious trust. And although it is true that the early Christian Church in a sense held aloof from politics, that is not the whole truth. Of necessity Christianity began with the renovation of the social bond giving it a purely religious character. At first the new faith had not strength to remodel the old civil ties on a new principle, but it soon worked back to these. Under its influence a confused and evil society gradually regained the unity it had lost, and life was withdrawn from the slavery of social impurities.[3]

Only blind fools would think that the temporary bewilderment of the people about the intricate problems of politics confronting them was a sign

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1 See B.W.'s of December 3, 1886, December 10, 1886, and January 7, 1887.

2 B.W., January 7, 1887.

3 Ibid.

that the people would not use their new power, and that all things would continue as they were. "If the Christian churches hold aloof - if Christian men fail to show a deep and generous passion for justice - the guidance of the new democracy will pass to others. For ourselves, we are with the people."[1] Nicoll believed that the people were willing to be led by Christian men who were willing to lead them. He was convinced that the problems which were coming up were largely ethical - questions of right and wrong. These problems could only be solved aright when the Spirit of Christ took possession of society, and the law of love prevailed. But how was this to be if Christian men frowned at politics and held aloof from them? Where were the people to turn when they found "the vulgar morality of a slipshod Parliamentary system intolerable? We shall best serve the civilisation of which we are at once the children and the soldiers by hastening to understand, to guide, and to meet the people as Christian politicians."[2] Nicoll was convinced that nothing could save a society - a democracy - except religion.

He had laid the foundation of this policy in his first leader where he had stated the paper's aims. Indeed, the sub-title of the B.W. was, A Journal of Social and Christian Progress. Moreover, he held to this policy tenaciously throughout his editorship of the B.W.. Sides should be taken when issues presented themselves, but as for himself and his paper he was convinced that all issues should be viewed from the standpoint of a true and full Christianity. And because of these convictions his editorial chair enabled him to bring to bear upon the Churches and the nation a persuasive and powerful Christian influence,

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1 Ibid.
2 Ibid.

which in time made him one of the most potent forces in public life. He was not an infallible judge on all questions, nor did he always pick the winning side, but throughout his career he could be depended upon to have a very sure instinct as to the trend of political feeling among the Nonconformists of which he became the chief literary and political shepherd. This instinct enabled him to persuade multitudes of readers to accept his views. Now and then these were personal fancies, but by far the greater part were convictions, which, when carried out, were of real benefit to his country and mankind in general. It is rewarding to study a few of the more important causes which Nicoll threw his weight behind and see how his convictions influenced his readers. Not all people agreed with him, nor did all his contemporary Nonconformist journals share his convictions. Because of his stand he often made enemies. This was to be expected, but it must be said that he had a sane and practical outlook upon life and thought in their varies aspects, and this outlook could not in the long run but command admiration and respect.

A few of his interests, e.g. temperance, Higher Criticism, Erastianism and anti-Sacerdotalism, theological controversy, and the betterment of social conditions, were continually showing themselves in the pages he edited. Frequently he devoted a leader or a "Claudius Clear" letter to them when other causes were for the moment dormant. Now and then these special interests of his blossomed forth as national issues, when Nicoll would be found in the think of the fray, defending with a keen mind and a vigorous pen what he thought should be the Nonconformists' viewpoint. Thus we find in the first volume these leaders: "The Present Position of the Temperance Movement," "The Temper of Controversy," "The Temper of Science," "What Are We to Believe about the Old Testament," "Our Case

Against the High Church Party," and "Tempted London." These, then, were the first appearances of the few themes which Nicoll dwelt on so continuously. They appeared quite frequently in the pages of the B.W. during his editorship. The wording and external appearances might change but the basic cause was evident. "Our Case Against the High Church Party," for example, took on many forms and shapes, e.g. the great Educational Struggle, but basically the issue was the same. "What Are We to Believe about the Old Testament" began with the new criticism of Old Testament, passed through many stages, and finally dealt mainly with the New Testament. "Tempted London" was the first of many social issues discussed. Interspersed with these were two other regularly appearing topics: literature and preaching. The great issues of the day relegated all of these to the background, but as the need arose they made their appearance. This does not mean that timely topics and other causes were neglected, but it is interesting to note the foremost themes running through the flow of leaders by which Nicoll gained his influence over such a multitude of readers. In all of them there was the Nonconformist viewpoint, the Christian outlook, and Nicoll's appeal and style.

It was Nicoll's definite and strong convictions which compelled people to read his messages. His followers knew that when he entered a controversy the side which he defended was that which he believed to be fair and of the greatest benefit to the largest number of people. He always took a strong and fearless stand. The B.W.'s Religious Census exemplified this. Concerning its results he said, "The one thing that has given us pain in this matter is that we have to publish to a world that does not distinguish nicely the fact that so many noble men are

preaching to so few."[1] In the Down Grade Controversy, when Mr. Spurgeon was at odds with the Baptist Union, Nicoll rallied to the aid of the Union even though it meant saying severe things about the one preacher, above all preachers, whom he had always revered.[2] "It is with real pain that we return to the Down Grade controversy. It is no pleasure even to seem to differ from a teacher so beloved and revered as Mr. Spurgeon, but we have no alternative."[3] Nicoll firmly believed that all problems should be treated in a Christian temper. But there were issues about which he was silent. One such issue was that of Woman Suffrage which, with its violence, created widespread attention.[4] In spite of his discrimination in the choice of subjects he gradually became known as a courageous protagonist in current affairs. As early as 1895 Dr. James Denney wrote Nicoll,

> I congratulate you . . . on the place you have made for the B.W. in the political as well as the religious world. You are quite an authority in places where you might hardly expect it, thanks to your candour and principle, not to mention the other things needful to command attention.[5]

For a true picture of religious journalism as Nicoll promoted it,

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1 "Lessons of Our Religious Census of London," B.W., December 17, 1886.

2 This reverence bordered on idolatry. His wife's reminiscence Under the Bay Tree are full of it. For a specific illustration of it see W.R.N.'s letter to Marcus Dods, who had made a slighting reference to Spurgeon shortly after his death, quoted in Darlow, op. cit., p. 103.

3 "Friend against Friend the Polished Missile Flinging," B.W., October 7, 1887.

4 Concerning women in public he once wrote his future wife: "You did quite right not to speak at the Bible Society meeting. I do not care for women speaking at all, unless it is to women. It spoils their sweetness. A woman is infinitely the worse for being half a man. There are plenty of men about." Letter from Nicoll to Miss Catherine Pollard, October 19, 1896, quoted in Darlow, op. cit., p. 140.

5 James Denney, Letters of Principal James Denney to W. Robertson Nicoll, 1893-1917, (London: Hodder & Stoughton, 1920), p. 7.

it is necessary to study some of the more important issues to which W.R.N. dedicated his time and energy.1 There was the Religious Census which began in the very first issue of the B.W. and had an arousing and lasting effect upon the peoples of the British Isles. It shook many churches and church people out of their complacency. Innumerable sermons were preached on the subject and it encouraged many similar surveys.

Much space and concern was given in the very early issues to what was called the Down Grade Controversy. It was actually the forerunner of the "New Theology" which was beginning to split the theological world. It was the argument over the privilege of liberty of interpretation. The Congregationalists had just passed through a similar outburst in their denomination. The Down Grade Controversy involved Charles Haddon Spurgeon, a Baptist, and the most eminent preacher of his day, who exercised a world-wide influence. He was prone to rush blindly into regions unfamiliar to him and to attack men whom he should have embraced. On the other hand, when he entered the spiritual realm, his preaching and writing took on such a character, that they carried one into communion with one of the great mystics of his day. His influence and popularity was such that when he began to suggest publicly that some ministers with whom he was associated in the Baptist Union were heretical, an atmosphere of suspicion was created, and when he took the extreme step of severing his connection with the union a very painful situation was precipitated. This came to a head when the August, 1887, issue of Spurgeon's magazine, the Sword and the Trowel, printed a very gloomy article about the many ministers who were on the "down grade" because he said they were

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1 The choice, of necessity, must be selective since Nicoll's editorship lasted through thirty-seven years of changing times.

attempting to unite church and stage, cards and prayer, dancing and sacraments.

> Too many ministers are toying with the deadly cobra of "another gospel," in the form of "modern thought." As a consequence, their congregations are thinning: the more spiritual of their members join the "Brethren," or some other company of "believers unattached"; while the more wealthy, and show-loving with some of unquestionable devoutness, go off to the Church of England.[1]

This had not been Spurgeon's first pronouncement on this theme, but before he had been vague about his accusations. In this article he had specifically named the Baptists which made the situation severe. Others began to worry about his position and wondered whether or not he would sever his connection with the London Baptist Association, or the larger Baptist Union. With respect to the former, Nicoll said, ". . . we believe we are correct in saying that Mr. Spurgeon has no such intention, but on the contrary feels very much at home there. For some years he has taken no part in the discussions of the Baptist Union, but still shares in its work."[2] In September Nicoll published letters he had received from prominent Free Church ministers in answer to his query "Are Nonconformists Departing from the Faith?" Almost to a man they said, "No." All the facts which Nicoll gathered were adverse to those in Spurgeon's statement. Spurgeon retaliated in his October Sword and the Trowel by dismissing the letters the B.W. published on the ground that the authors were either denominational partisans or colour blind. Against two he brought the charge of bad faith. Nicoll answered him in a soundly reasoned and very fair leader.

> As to doctrine we have no dispute with Mr. Spurgeon. We believe as fully as he does that no preaching is of use in which the Person and

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1 Sword and the Trowel, August, 1887.
2 B.W., August 12, 1887.

> Work of Christ are not made to shine before the souls of men. Nor do we dispute for one moment that there is a very large and threatening amount of unbelief in all the churches. To combat this is the main business of this journal. But the issue originally raised by Mr. Spurgeon was wholly different. He brought an indictment against the Congregationalists and Baptists and charged them with serious aberration from the faith. He made complimentary allusion to the Church of England in contrast. The evil, according to him, was growing worse, and he said, "If for a while evangelicals are doomed to go down, let them die fighting." We are not at liberty to quote from private letters and conversations, but Mr. Spurgeon will not deny that he wrote in the belief, which he by no means concealed, that the Congregationalists were in the main non-Evangelical, and that the Baptists were rapidly following suit. It was against these appalling accusations that we, with the most honoured leaders of Nonconformist Evangelicalism, protested.[1]

Letters concerning the issue from all who signed their name Nicoll had published in the B.W.. These letters caused widespread interest in the controversy. In answer to these, Spurgeon wrote an article, "The Case Proved" in the October Sword and the Trowel. In his defence he said:

> Our warning was intended to call attention to an evil which we thought was apparent to all: we never dreamed that the "previous question" would be raised, and that a company of esteemed friends would rush in between the combatants, and declare that there was no cause for war, but that our motto might continue to be "Peace, peace." Yet such has been the case, and in many quarters the main question has been, not "How can we remove the evil?" but, "Is there any evil to remove?" No end of letters have been written with this as their theme - "are the charges made by Mr. Spurgeon at all true?" Setting aside the question of our own veracity, we could have no objection to the most searching discussion of the matter. By all means let the truth be known.[2]

Spurgeon remained firm in his convictions and seceded from the Baptists. The Baptist Union, in spite of its deep affection and sincere reverence for its greatest preacher, remained firm in their convictions and refused to confine the ministry with illiberal restrictions. It must be added, however, that Mr. Spurgeon's later references to the Union were in the

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1 B.W., October 7, 1887.
2 The Sword and the Trowel, October, 1887.

kindlier vein of earlier days, but he never rejoined.

As for social conditions the Free Churches had begun to realize their responsibility. Society was becoming interested in the inquiry into the state of the "submerged." Investigations held the public's interest and the results were not consoling. One of the contributing factors for this was the publication in 1883 of Andrew Mearn's, Bitter Cry of Outcast London which led to conferences between the Free Churches and to Assembly discussions on the Relation of the Churches to the Poor. Since 1884, commissions on Sweated Trades and on Housing, sometimes with the Prince of Wales as Chairman, examined depths previously unfathomed. Nicoll was aware of this growing concern within Nonconformity, and this probably assured him that an interested reception would be given to a series of articles on employment in London. This he began under the title Tempted London, which he published in the B.W. as a series extending over a year and a half. These articles commenced with the young man coming up from the country, describing his first impressions, his lodgings, his business life, his wages, his prospects and companions, his temptations (drinking and gambling being fully gone into), the forces that worked for his good, the influences of churches and individual ministers, Christian Associations and missions, and the question of remedial agencies and the duties of Christians. It was fully illustrated by narratives of actual incidents in life. The series dealt first with young men and later took up the case of young women. The facts for the articles had been gathered from ministers, from the heads of missions, from Y.M.C.A.'s and especially from the young people themselves employed in the city. But the greater part of the material was gathered from the investigations made by commissioners specially assigned to the search by the British Weekly.

He felt certain that the series would be of universal interest, because there was hardly a household in the land that was not more or less concerned, nor was there a parish however remote or obscure from which young men did not find their way to London.

> There is, perhaps, no one who has not a relative or friend who has made that pilgrimage to the great city, and encountered the battle of life there. It is literally true of millions that all their lives have been darkened by the defeat and wreck of some one they loved in the awful city. As many are spending at this moment anxious days and nights in thinking how their dear ones who have gone out from the sheltered home are faring face to face with the wickedness in its most seductive form.[1]

But to forewarn the seekers of the sensational Nicoll let it be firmly understood,

> We desire to make it sun-clear from the first that we shall have nothing for the lover of the prurient - no directory to hell - nothing but what may be read in any family. At the same time we shall have much to say that will startle many, and it will be our duty to criticise frankly even agencies with which we sympathise. Our facts are all guaranteed, and we shall hold ourselves bound, on proper challenge, to make them good.[2]

It was a very interesting series which not only increased circulation but did much good. It makes morbidly fascinating reading even today. When Nicoll reviewed the first six years of the paper's history, he said concerning this series, "Ministers of all denominations preached upon the "Tempted London" articles, and when the book appeared it formed the subject of a notice in the Quarterly Review. The paper on gambling had a considerable effect in closing certain clubs."[3] Many people had sent donations of money in order that they might be used to alleviate the conditions that existed. Scores of letters were sent in to the paper from young working men and women thanking the B.W. for bringing their

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1 B.W., October 7, 1887.
2 B.W., September 23, 1887.
3 B.W., December 23, 1898.

situations to light.

In March, 1899, the Daily Telegraph announced that they would publish an edition of their paper on Sunday. A few days later the Daily Mail stated that they too would print a Sunday edition. This alarmed the editor of the B.W., who immediately contacted the Mail to verify the situation. He was told that the Mail guaranteed its readers that it would always meet any competition as soon as it arose. Nicoll told this to his readers through a paragraph in the "Notes of the Week" section, March 30th. The following week the same section carried another paragraph which announced that the Mail's owner, Mr. Alfred Harmsworth, was the main barrier to a settlement. Nicoll said that the Daily Telegraph could have been coped with but the Mail should have known better. A week later (April 13) "Notes of the Week" announced that Sunday editions of these newspapers had duly appeared and that the circulation was said to have been enormous, (700,000 of one and 500,000 of the other.). This was the beginning of what became known as the fight against seven-day journalism. The people were ready to rise to meet this foe, and under the leadership of the B.W. they did. In Nicoll's leader of April 20th, 1899, he faced the situation.

> The battle is fairly on us now, and it is perhaps the most serious battle that Christianity in this country has had to fight during the century. It is, in our view, far more important even than the war on ritualism. The issues it involves are of even greater gravity. It is not too much to say that it will be in the end a battle for life and death. Till recently we had hopes of Mr. Harmsworth, and even now we do not wholly despair.[1]

Nicoll believed that the real danger to the Church of Christ was the secularisation of men's minds and ways. What should be done? He sternly

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1 B.W., April 20, 1899.

warned them how terrible and costly this struggle could be.

> There is no great struggle in which the Christian is engaged which is not a terrible and costly struggle . . . . If we think we are going to come out conquerors out of this battle without expenditure, without loss, without fighting to the full stress of our powers, without exposing ourselves to danger which may mean ruin, then we are much mistaken.[1]

He felt that the battle must be fought by the churches, not by preaching alone, but by the members refusing to buy and read any issues of these newspapers, and even going so far as to boycott the newsdealers that sold the papers and the firms that advertised in those papers. One other step might be necessary, and that would have been legislation which Nicoll felt could be successfully accomplished. The B.W. also published many letters from readers. They all felt quite certain that seven-day journalism would never "catch on."

The following week the leader was more optimistic.

> We are glad to find from the Newsagent that the Retail Newsagent and Booksellers' Union are intending to do all in the power of the trade, supported by the clergy and ministers of all denominations and backed by the unions of labour throughout the land, to prevent the introduction of the seven-day newspaper into the country.[2]

The movement was growing. The people were coöperating in the cause. Success came quickly. In "Notes of the Week" (May 18th) a paragraph announced the death of the Sunday Daily Mail. Nicoll's elation showed between the lines of the note.

> As we go to press it is announced that the Sunday Daily Mail is to cease. This is described as "a frank concession to the religious feeling of the public." It is further said, "We bury it without regret," and it is owned that the resolutions of protest from the country have assumed gigantic proportions. All's well that ends well, and we are the last persons to press a victory. Nevertheless it must

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1 B.W., April 20, 1899.
2 B.W., April 27, 1899.

> be pointed out that this is distinctly a victory. If the Sunday Mail had been discontinued earlier, the end would have come with far better grace. . . . The Sunday Telegraph still goes on.[1]

Nicoll regretted the harsh feelings which had been caused on both sides. He hoped that amends could be made and that friendly relations between the public, the newsdealers, and the press could be restored. The following week the Sunday Daily Telegraph capitulated. In his "Notes" Nicoll commented on this. "As we anticipated last week, the Telegraph has not been able to hold out long after the death of its rival . . . . The victory is complete, and the experiment of seven-day journalism has been buried, we trust never to revive. We can now turn with fresh hope and courage to the conflicts which await us in the future."[2] The conflict had ended almost as quickly as it started. The greater share of that victory belonged to Nicoll. His assistant editor made the claim, ". . . he threw himself with ardour into the fight against seven-day journalism, and his powerful articles had no small share in winning the victory."[3] During the Education Bill controversy one paper compared it to the seven-day journalism conflict. "The British Weekly did more than any other paper or person to kill seven-day journalism in this country, and Dr. Nicoll may shortly be able to put another feather in his editorial cap."[4]

The Boer War was the next great issue to absorb the interest of the B.W. and its readers.[5] Exactly a year after the war broke out the United Presbyterian Church of Erskine and Gillespie joined forces with the Free Church of Chalmers and Candlish, to form the United Free Church of Scotland. Ever since the Free Church agreed to negotiate for Union in

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1 B.W., May 18, 1899.
2 B.W., May 25, 1899.
3 J. T. Stoddart, op. cit., p. 126.
4 Finchley Times, November 19, 1902.
5 For the discussion of this see below pp. 186 ff.

1897 Nicoll had kept his readers informed of the progress. On October 31, 1900, Nicoll himself saw the members of both Synods march to a hall specially fitted in the Waverley Market, Edinburgh, and the two Moderators join hands in token of a lasting union in the presence of a throng of enthusiastic spectators. Nicoll wrote a lengthy news article of the event in the next issue, and the following week he wrote a leader concerning it. "The event will be hailed as one of rich promise and historic importance through all the Christian world."[1] This was all of the notice he gave to it in his Weekly, but with his new venture, the British Monthly, he published an elaborate supplement which not only reported every phase of the event but gave a complete pictorial record as well. A shadow of legal war, however, hung over the Union which was to demand a good deal of time and space from the B.W. and its editor. Instead of joining the Union a Free Church Minority decided to continue the Church of the Disruption. Within six weeks from the date of the Union this minority raised an action in the Court of Session. The men responsible were only twenty in number - nine ministers and eleven elders, and little attention was at first paid, but a prediction of the trouble ahead had been forecast fully thirteen years previously. The B.W. in its "Scottish Themes of the Week" had been commenting on Principal Rainy's closing address which he gave at the 1887 assembly. He had been expressing his views regarding the union of the Churches. The B.W. reported, "A correspondent . . . gives fair warning that if the union with the United Presbyterian Church is again revived, the question of the Free Church property will at once be raised. This was the rock on which the

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1 B.W., November 8, 1900.

union negotiations were wrecked before, he plainly asserts; and he is certain the same thing will happen again. We shall wait and see."[1] The prediction almost came true. This first action raised by the minority, contemptuously called "Wee Frees," resulted in Lord Low in the Outer House of the Court of Session giving judgement against them. They appealed, and in 1902 the Second Division of the Court of Session confirmed Lord Low's judgement. They refused to accept the findings of the Scottish College of Justice and appealed to the House of Lords. This threw a different light upon the case. For in appealing to the House of Lords as the Supreme Tribunal in the United Kingdom,

> The dissentients undoubtedly exercised a right, but they thus deliberately carried the case into an atmosphere where Presbyterianism with its peculiar controversies could not be sure of an intimate and sympathetic understanding, and where its characteristic conception of the Church had to be explained as something strange and almost foreign.[2]

The first hearing of the case by the House of Lords sitting as a Court of Appeal was in November, 1903.

All of these proceedings at first received no more than a paragraph now and then in the B.W., under the general heading "Notes of the Week." In factthe seeming absurdity of a small handful claiming to be entitled to the entire heritage of the Disruption not only caused the majority to treat them with ridicule but it aroused a very bitter feeling between the groups, which reduced any chances of conciliation. A decision by the House of Lords was expected early in 1904 but the death of one of the judges delayed it.[3] On August 1, 1904, the decision of the House of Lords was given in favour of the Free Church minority claims. The decision

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1 B.W., June 10, 1887.
2 Fleming, Church of Scotland 1875-1929, p. 63.
3 For more complete details of the entire crisis see Fleming, Church of Scotland 1875-1929, pp. 59 f.

amazed all of Scotland. It gave this remnant of the Free Church enormous claims.

> The entire property of the Free Church of Scotland, which was a Church with some 1100 ministers, three fully equipped theological colleges, and a missionary organization which ranked second or third among the Protestant missions of the world, was ordered to be given over to a Church with some score and a half ministers, one professor with (it is said) three students, and not a single missionary.[1]

Nicoll, a Presbyterian born and bred, had always remained devoted to his native faith. He had always given it his well-informed support. So it was that this decision of the House of Lords seemed to fall upon him as a personal blow. He immediately rallied all his resources to engage in the struggle at hand. He described his part in a letter to his wife.

> In the afternoon /Monday, Aug. 1st, 1904/ Mr. Donald, the editor of the Daily Chronicle, came round to take me to his office to write the leader. We got there at five. As it was Bank Holiday, everything was disorganized and it was seven o'clock before I got the decision of the judges in detail . . . . I read the judgments, dictated the article (which I sent you) a column long, and got to the Devonshire at five minutes to eight! The quickest bit of work I have ever done. The article (in the Daily Chronicle) seems to have made an impression, as you may have noticed. I also "inspired" the Westminster and the Daily Mail . . . . Then on Tuesday I was all day at my leader (for the British Weekly). It is certainly the hardest bit of work I have ever done. I finished it about 10 p.m. It is the best that ever I could do, and I hope I may never have such a job again. I do not feel depressed. This will work for good and come right in the end. I only feel concerned about my own duty in the matter.[2]

Nicoll's leader in the British Weekly turned out to be the longest he had ever written - nine full columns. It was a thorough statement of the situation. He told of the judgment and the effect it would have. He told of the great suffering he thought would ensue when the Minority dis-

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1 Patrick Carnegie Simpson, The Life of Principal Rainy, (London: Hodder and Stoughton), p. 354.

2 C. R. Nicoll, Under the Bay Tree, p. 175.

possessed those ministers and their families that were then residing in what was formerly United Free Church property. In spite of all of this he believed that somehow it might be God's providence. So he urged all to have faith and courage. Then he added the practical steps that should be taken. He ended with a stirring conclusion.

> It is however, essential to remember that no settlement can be arrived at which interferes with the great principles of spiritual independence. There can be no compromist on any point where principle is involved. We had rather see the majority beginning life over again, and gradually building up new altars and new hearths than paltering for a the right. We would rather see them fare like the two thousand ejected in 1662, of whom some died broken-hearted, some left the country, some became physicians, some private tutors, many farm servants and artisans. Better such ends with conscience clear than the comfortable resumption of everything at the cost of betrayal.[1]

This same issue of the B.W. contained full pages of comments and excerpts from the religious and secular press throughout Britain. This feature was unique with the B.W., and gave its readers a complete picture of the situation as seen through the eyes of the rest of the press world, a service no other paper, religious or secular, attempted to render. They were thus better able to grasp the feeling throughout the nation, a grasp they would have got in no other way, and they were not subjected to one editor's (Nicoll's) viewpoint alone.

W.R.N.'s leader the following week was brighter in tone.[2] He continued the view that this decision might in some way be God's providence. Be that as it may, he was convinced that now the ministers and the people of the United Free Church were more "solidified" than they had ever been. In this issue of the B.W. he devoted much space to the views of a great number of ministers who had made references from their pulpits, in sermons, the previous Sunday to the Scottish Church Case.

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1 B.W., August 4, 1904.

2 This and the previous week's leader were the only leaders Nicoll wrote concerning this case except two near its conclusion in October, 1905. He did not write "leader after leader" as Darlow stated, p. 186.

These set forth both sides of the controversy.

It is safe to say that at the announcement of the House of Lords' decision the public surprise was very general. But it soon became evident that the enforcing and carrying out of such a judgment was practically impossible. The Commission of Assembly of the United Free Church met in Edinburgh a week after the judgment was announced. The B.W. kept its readers informed of all of these events through its "Notes of the Week." It was reported as news along with other current events such as the Russo-Japanese War and the passive resistance of the Education Struggle which was still going strongly and which therefore commanded a large share of the news space. Now and then there were special articles on the Scottish Church Case by eminent spokesmen and correspondents, but these were infrequent. These articles, however, kept the B.W.'s readers completely informed of the history which was being made. In October, 1904, the Court of Session found themselves pressed into making the judgments operative. Interdict followed interdict. The most momentous of these was the turning over of the Assembly Hall and the New College in Edinburgh to the "Wee Frees." Numerous ministers and their congregations were turned out of their churches. It became increasingly evident that the Government soon would have to intervene. The Government now saw the difficulty which the Free Church was having in administering its trust, and announced the setting-up of a Royal Commission to examine the facts and to determine the necessity of Parliamentary intervention. This Royal Commission had many sittings, and examined the evidence and arguments submitted to them. The recommendation was made that Parliament appoint an Executive Commission to make a fair allocation to the Free Church of the property and funds it was able to use and administer, and

to transfer the rest to the United Free Church, whom they thought was more capable of administering the larger proportion. On June 7, 1905, the "Churches (Scotland) Bill" was introduced into the House of Commons. This promised Bill would embody the necessary Parliamentary legislation. It was finally passed by an overwhelming majority. But the end did not come suddenly. The Free Church was unwilling to undertake another legal battle to appeal against the Act. Claim and counter-claim wearily absorbed many months until it all came to a gradual halt.

In April, 1901, Nicoll began a series of articles in the B.W. on the timely subject of Higher Criticism. In November of the same year these leaders were published in a volume under the title The Church's One Foundation.[1]

In 1902 the Education Bill offended the Nonconformists, who under Clifford's oratory and Nicoll's leaders and speeches brought about what became known as the Passive Resistance Movement, which dragged on until the beginning of the first World War.[2]

One question of this period with which the entire country was concerned, but about which Nicoll took no more interest than to include news items in the B.W.'s, "Notes of the Week," was the Chinese labour situation in South Africa. In 1904, the mineowners who operated the Rand gold mines were short of labour and asked government permission to import 50,000 Chinese. The government in a weak moment consented. This decision resulted in an experiment which proved objectionable to the people of Britain for two reasons. It was offensive on moral grounds. The Chinese

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1 These essays are discussed more fully infra, pp. 230 ff.

2 The following chapter is devoted to the study of this subject from the standpoint of Nicoll's participation in it.

coolies had to work under slave-like conditions, and to live without their wives under conditions of restrictions in compounds. Moreover, the working classes thought that it was an attempt by rich capitalists to increase their profits by getting rid of "white" labour. It was the former view, the moral issue, which incensed the general public the more. The secular papers gave it their full attention, but none of the religious papers did more than to mention developments as items of news. Possibly they all felt as the editor of the B.W. felt when he wrote, "The question is one which it is impossible to discuss frankly in public, but anyone may know what had to happen when some 40,000 Chinamen were sent out with two or three Chinese women. Our friends in South Africa may take it for granted that the people of this country are determined to make an end of this business."[1] The editors of the other religious journals might have felt that in spite of the newspapers' glaring publicity this was a topic not suitable for discussion in a religious paper. Nicoll said that that was his reason but his other news items seem to invalidate his position. In the B.W. (August 3rd, 1905) he told of the atrocious treatment of the Chinese in order to substantiate the claim that they were being treated as slaves. Then on September 28, 1905, just two weeks after he had claimed the subject too delicate for frank discussion, he wrote a news item, concerning the situation. It was an itemized account of the atrocities committed by the Rand Chinese, an account which was as gruesome and morbid an article as any ever printed in the British Weekly. Beyond these meagre facts W.R.N.'s actual attitude toward the whole situation cannot be fully ascertained.

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1 "Notes of the Week," B.W., September 14, 1905.

Disestablishment in France was a subject which engrossed the religious-minded of Britain in May, 1905. A leader on this subject written in the B.W. helped its readers to become better informed and to follow its course. "The impending disestablishment and disendowment of the Church in France is an event of the first magnitude, and claims the deepest study from Nonconformists everywhere."[1] This leader was based on two French books concerning that country's problem of Church and State and although unsigned it was written by Nicoll's assistant editor, Jane T. Stoddart. "I am glad to think that I could help my Editor by writing leading articles on the French Disestablishment Bill. We followed that controversy with the keenest attention, providing ourselves with many books, pamphlets and newspapers from Paris."[2] Miss Stoddart was also responsible for the B.W.'s series of leading articles on Socialism which she wrote in 1908. They were published in volume form with the title, The New Socialism: An Impartial Inquiry.

In the first decade of the century the churches were disturbed by what was to be known as the "New Theology" Controversy. This arose through the teachings of the Rev. R. J. Campbell, who had succeeded Dr. Parker, as miniter of the City Temple, in 1903. After Campbell had been preaching at the City Temple for two or three years the hearers of his sermons, and the readers of them, (they had been published in the Christian Commonwealth and other periodicals) claimed that his teaching of the immanence of God was in reality a form of Pantheism, that he denied the miraculous, and that in reality he was forsaking the essentials of the

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1 B.W., May 4, 1905.
2 J. T. Stoddart, "I Remember," B.W., November 12, 1936.

Christian faith. Campbell's liberal theology was not "new," but his approach to it might have been considered so. A similar controversy had arisen in 1888 when "Lux Mundi" and "Robert Elsmere" appeared. The latter had been written by Mrs. Humphry Ward and Nicoll had given it the first serious criticism to be published. The criticism was in a leader called "The Women of Feeling."

> At this moment the orthodox view of the New Testament holds the field. It has turned the edge of all the instruments used on it. Every attempt to account for Christ and Christianity apart from the supernatural is a confessed failure. The problem remains round and hard as a ball of adamant. . . . We admit the pressure of questions about the Old Testament. But however they may be answered, the sense of the depth, the wisdom, the potency of the record itself, grows and will grow. Then as to the new religion. The problem of constructing Christianity minus the miraculous is not new.[1]

But Nicoll became as alarmed as anyone over Campbell's "New Theology." One of Campbell's basic tenets was the explanation along physical lines, of miracles.[2] In January, 1907, Nicoll began a series of leaders on what he called "City Temple Theology." He attacked Campbell as an advocate of Pantheism. Principal James Denney agreed with Nicoll.

> The article on Campbell seemed to me pretty decisive, and I don't know what more can be said. It is really not worth while to elucidate any man's improvisations on God and the universe. Setting conscience aside, as James Mozley said, there are no two easier subjects to talk about; and pantheism just means setting conscience aside. I do not believe there is any way to argue against it except by insisting that conscience cannot be set aside - that it persists in spite of all the systems which have explained it away, and that a man knows quite well he is a scoundrel when he applies solvents to it.[3]

Campbell published a book The New Theology which he said, "has been undertaken at the request of a number of my friends, who feel that recent criticisms of what has come to be called the "New Theology" ought

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1 British Weekly, March 9, 1888.
2 R. J. Campbell, The New Theology, pp. 259 f.
3 Letters of Principal James Denney, pp. 79 f.

to be dealt with in some comprehensive and systematic way."[1] This book came out in March and Nicoll attacked it most vehemently. Violent attacks were made on Campbell, and many people rallied to his defence who by no means agreed with his opinions. The public's imagination was stirred by the issues involved, issues which were debated for months in both the secular and the religious press. Mr. Campbell was a Congregationalist and there were many demands that he be dropped from their Union. Bishop Gore of Birmingham published a book, The New Theology and the Old Religion. Nicoll praised this book as it was an attack on Campbell. Nicoll liked Campbell but not his theology, and he was one of the first to claim him, "a preacher who would soon be influential and famous."[2] And this praise had been given a few years before he had been chosen as a preacher in the City Temple. Campbell, too, had written for many months a weekly column in the B.W. called "The Rev. R. J. Campbell's Correspondence Column," in which he answered numerous religious and theological queries. This column was always signed "R. J. Campbell, The City Temple." It ceased when the controversy started. The excitement of the controversy gradually died, and in 1915 Campbell resigned the City Temple and joined the Church of England after he had publicly withdrawn The New Theology from circulation. In 1916, Campbell published a book called Spiritual Pilgrimage which called forth a leader from Nicoll entitled, "A Foregone Conclusion." In it he said,

> His /Campbell's/ secession from Nonconformity and his re-ordination in the Church of England were a foregone conclusion. Nothing could be franker than his confession that he was never a Nonconformist at heart. "Nonconformists will forgive me for saying that no one of

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1 Campbell, The New Theology, p. v.
2 C. R. Nicoll, Under the Bay Tree, p. 32.

> their number has ever touched me at all from first to last, and I am not conscious of owing anything of my religious life to Nonconformist influences." It is difficult to believe that Mr. Campbell means what he has here allowed himself to say. He lived for twenty years in the heart of Nonconformist Christianity, ...[1]

The years 1911-12 were marked by a series of strikes carried on on an unprecedented scale. In 1911 a railway strike temporarily paralysed the railways. In 1912 among other strikes, nearly a million coal-miners struck for a month, necessitating government intervention and an act establishing minimum wages for all classes of underground workers.[2] The 1911 strikes had involved Nicoll, who had been brought into contact with the strife when the printers struck and threatened curtailment of the B.W., through its printing firm of Messrs. Hazell, Watson & Viney. The London Society of Compositors had asked Nicoll to use his influence to get the men of Hazell, Watson & Viney reinstated since they had accepted the fifty hours' week over which the strike had been called. Nicoll's secretary wrote, "He engaged a private room and ordered tea with buttered toast, which the deputation enjoyed very much. Then they had a very candid consultation, which has resulted in the strike being completely at an end now, so that we can have thirty-two pages in the B.W. whenever we like."[3] The general strike at the end of February, 1912, when the million coal miners struck, causing coal using industries to close, created almost another million of unemployed. That same week Nicoll wrote an ominous leader in the B.W., "The Massing of the Masses."

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1 B.W., October 12, 1916.

2 The realization of the power behind these strikes, and the remembrance of the Passive Resistance Movement, in which Nicoll was a leader, might have had much to do with the Government's enlisting Nicoll's aid at the outbreak of the war in order to rally young men, especially Nonconformists, to enlist. The strikes made Denney think of this. "But what a nightmare the miners' strike is. And what a fiasco even national registration might prove if passive resistance on the scale of the strike were all that was needed to defeat it." Letters of Denney, p. 250.

3 Letter to Lady Robertson Nicoll, Mar. 16, 1911, quoted in Darlow, p. 220.

> Let us look round as calmly as we may. The week has been black with suffering, with menace, and with fear. The shadow of famine lies over the land. We cannot wonder that among many there has been called into existence for the first time that poisonous sense of terror which kills hope and paralyses judgment . . . . Middle-aged people can look back on dark and anxious weeks in the national history, but there has never been anything quite like this. To get a mass of working men to pull steadily together is a work of tremendous difficulty. It has been achieved on a scale so great as to be quite new. Even now there are few who have not suffered, directly or indirectly. But the future is pregnant with calamity and disaster, much of it irretrievable. There are not ungrounded fears of civil war and anarchy, with their atrocities and devastations. These fears will, we believe, be scattered, and, whatever happens, it is best for us to face the facts as frankly and bravely as we may.[1]

He believed that this was the power of Democracy being manifested, but he was not too certain that a nation could justifiably delegate a duty which properly falls on itself. In any case, he said, Demos is not going to abdicate. What he has gained by long labour and travail he is resolved to keep. He was never so fully conscious of his own strength and right. He may often make mistakes, but though it is true that the voice of the people is not the voice of God, it is at least equally true that the voice of the rich, or the wise, or the aristocracy, is not the voice of God. "It is better to trust in the people than to trust in a class, for the mistakes of the people will teach them wisdom, while the mistakes of the class will only teach the class to distrust the people, and possibly even to hate them."[2] Nicoll assured his readers that the only hope for Demos was that Demos should be Christian and never had the Christian Church been offered a better opportunity. He agreed with those who said that if Christianity had no influence on politics it followed that Christianity was false. Take away Christianity, extinguish public worship

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1 B.W., March 7, 1912.
2 Ibid.

and private prayer, reduce the Bible to a book like any other book, and given a faithless world, the inevitable end will be black despair and bitter spite. Human society must be regenerated before it can be turned into a divine community of love, and it is only in such a community that happiness can be found.

Two more leaders developed this theme. Their titles designate their contents. "Faith Amid Changes" (March 21) and "The Church at School" (April 11, 1912). The latter referred to the Church learning from the actions of society which were likened to the teachings of a school. Later all these leaders were gathered together and published in a book entitled, "The Christian Attitude Towards Democracy." All of the strike furore was short-lived, for by the end of March the Coal Mines Act had become law and the strikes ended by the middle of April.

One of the issues which Nicoll intermittently kept championing from the beginning of the B.W. until the issue became a reality was Welsh Disestablishment. In the first issue of the B.W. Nicoll had written in his "Notes of the Week,"

> The conference of Liberal politicians in Wales is a notable event, and these are signs that "neglected Wales" has made up her mind that she shall be no longer neglected . . . . Will Mr. Gladstone and Lord Rosebery declare for Disestablishment in Wales? If so they will again arouse the enthusiasm which alone is lacking to secure an unbroken Liberal victory for the Principality . . . . The Welsh people must make up their minds to secure a Welsh Liberal Party in ardent sympathy with the Radical spirit of the Welsh people, who will make it their business to see that Welsh questions in Parliament are neither ignored nor postponed.[1]

The B.W. was only three months old when he had an authority on the subject write an article. This writer explained the whole situation to the B.W.'s readers.

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1 B.W., November 5, 1886.

> The Disestablishment of the Church in Wales has become the foremost question of the Welsh nation. The unscriptural character of the connection between Church and State has always been a primary article in the creed of Welsh Nonconformists, and the injustice of taxing the whole nation for the purpose of supporting the religion of a very small minority has always been recognized; but it is only within recent years that the subject has come within the range of practical politics.[1]

The writer claimed that the campaign in Wales was started forty years previously. At first, he said, no one had thought it possible, but with the Disestablishment of the Irish Church came the first glimmer of hope. Disestablishment for Wales had at last become a real issue. On May 4, 1888, Nicoll, himself, wrote a leader called, "Disestablishment: Duties of the Lull." He said that it was to the religious aspects of the question that he desired to draw attention.

> Religious equality is not a question between church and church. It is not a question of numbers. Attacks on the life and doctrine of established churches have, as a rule, recoiled on the assailant. The establishment of a privileged majority is in some aspects more unjust than the establishment of a privileged minority. The question is one of principle.[2]

When Lloyd George entered the House of Commons in 1890 as a fiery young orator of twenty-seven he was more of a Welsh nationalist than a British Liberal. But Wales' main complaint was an ecclesiastical problem, a demand for the disestablishment of the section of the Church of England in Wales. This demand seemed about to be satisfied in 1895 whtn Mr. Asquith introduced the Welsh Disestablishment Bill into the House of Commons. The Government fell in June, and the Liberals were overwhelmingly defeated in July, thus shattering the hopes of Nonconformists for many years. Nicoll kept his readers informed, supporting Lloyd George and the other

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1 John Thomas, "Disestablishment in Wales," B.W., February 11, 1887.
2 B.W., May 4, 1888.

Welsh revolters, and by his ardent backing created much interest in the issue. The Welsh Disestablishment bill was re-introduced in 1912, coupled with the Irish Home Rule bill in order to benefit by the new Parliament Act.[1] But it was not until April of 1914 that, unlike the Irish bill, it became law after being passed for the third time in the House of Commons. An announcement to that effect appeared in the B.W. April 23, 1914.

Another issue which Nicoll followed from the beginning of the B.W. was the temperance movement. In print he was against all forms of alcohol, yet in private life he never seemed to object to its use. Perhaps he believed as his father had. He said of him,

> He was practically a vegetarian and a teetotaller. Teetotalism, indeed, he used to repudiate vehemently, having a strong objection to the use of unfermented wine, or rather, to the theory which lay behind that use. But he was like the American theologian who drank one glass of wine every year in order to assert his Christian rights. I doubt very much whether my father drank as much as one glass of wine a year in the course of his life, though to hear him talk against unfermented wine, the uninstructed might suppose him to be a Bacchanalian.[2]

Whether Nicoll held to this view is not known, but his liking for champagne was indicated in letters to his wife.[3] Writers have mentioned this dual outlook of his,[4] but Nicoll's biographer defends his viewpoint.

> Personally, however, Nicoll never pretanded to be himself an abstainer. And many of his critics - together with some of his friends -

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1 Home Rule, although followed quite thoroughly in the B.W. because of the Protestant-Catholic issue, was too predominantly political to claim full attention here; so too, Lloyd George's Land Scheme. In the B.W., April 8, 1887, Nicoll's leader stated that the Liberals would never coerce Ulster and then said (what might apply here) "Let the Irish settle the Irish question." To this policy he adhered very strictly. See letter to Drummond in Darlow, p. 70.

2 W.R. Nicoll, My Father, p. 7.

3 See C.R. Nicoll, Under the Bay Tree, p. 94, and Darlow, op. cit., p. 131.

4 e.g., A.S. Peake, "William Robertson Nicoll," Howard (editor) Recollections and Appreciations, p. 27, also Times Weekly Edition, May 10, 1923.

> felt that it was not very easy to reconcile this apparent inconsistency between precept and practice. Assuredly he had scant tolerance for the fanatics who denounce alcohol as poison. He understood how grievously the progress of the temperance cause in this country has been hampered and hindered by reckless propagandists. For no serious Christian can ignore the fact that Christ Himself deliberately refused to imitate the asceticism of John the Baptist. The Son of Man came eating and drinking. He was reviled as a wine-bibber, and He consecrated the drinking of wine when He made it part of His great Sacrament of fellowship.[1]

This is probably true, yet in a leader, when the B.W. was only 14 numbers old, Nicoll tells his readers,

> It is not necessary here to discuss the duty of Christian workers who do not come directly in contact with the masses. But it is a simple matter of fact that for those who do, total abstinence is an absolute necessity. The people listen at best with apathy to those who advise them to abstain and do not themselves set the example. We are exceedingly sceptical as to the good results of going down to the people in the way of Mr. Headlam, who piously points out the advantages of the ballet, and of Mr. Shuttleworth, who has dances on Saturday night and services on Sunday . . . . It is the presentation of the unworldly and self-denying life that wins the scoffer and the sceptic . . . . Now we believe that it is not drunkenness, but so-called moderate drinking, that in most cases brings to the ground the last defence of the spirit. The tempted fall, not when intoxicated, but when exhilarated by drink.[2]

During the lifetime of the B.W. editor, he backed, with all his resources, the temperance movement. This movement had been gathering the approval of the churches and public alike. The drink bill for 1909 was the lowest recorded for twenty years.[3] At the beginning of the war (1914-18) the problem took on a new meaning. The opinion that the sale of distilled liquors should be stopped during the conflict seemed to have widespread support. Principal Denney wrote Nicoll, "I don't believe it is too much to say that if the country were polled it would be as unanimously and enthusiastically in favour of this measure as of the prosecution of the war itself."[4] About this same time (the spring of

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1 Darlow, op. cit., p. 243.
2 B.W., February 4, 1887.
3 Fleming, op. cit., p. 183.
4 Letters of Denney, p. 246.

1915) King George V ordered that the consumption of any form of alcohol within the Royal palaces should cease as long as the war lasted. This decree gave added impetus to the cause of temperance and the B.W., along with several other papers, advocated national prohibition. In April, 1915, Nicoll's leader spoke for total prohibition.

> As our readers know, we have from the beginning of the war steadily advocated the adoption of drastic measures by the Government in order to meet the dangers and evils entailed by the sale of drink. Last week we suggested that the total prohibition of spirits might meet the case - at least, as a preliminary measure. We are now satisfied, from facts and figures put before us, that this view was mistaken, and that it will be necessary to go further.[1]

This decision had been based upon an interview he had had with the Secretary and Chairman of the Shipbuilders Federation. They informed Nicoll that Britain depended on her fleet and that her fleet depended on the shipbuilder's yard. They told him that beer was worse than whiskey because the men sat too long over their beer and became completely befuddled. They related stories of urgent repairs being held up until beer-drinking men finished their "sing-song." All of this he told his readers in defence of total prohibition. The curtailment of hours would only create trade in bottles, reducing alcoholic element in beer would only cause the men to consume more. "Partial withdrawal would be resented. A universal withdrawal would bring home to the people more than any other single step the fact that we are in a great war. Prohibition would clear hearts and brains and bodies, and would create a new spirit among people."[2] He advocated this policy for the rest of the war.

Not all religious journals shared this view, however, and some

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1 B.W., April 22, 1915.
2 Ibid.

were outspoken in the opposite direction. In November, 1916, 2,000 men of high rank and position, signed what was called the Strength of Britain Memorial asking the Government to suspend the Drink Trade "in order to shorten the war." The Church Times wrote a biting editorial (November 3, 1916) accusing the Memorial of "deliberate falsehoods." On behalf of the 2,000 a letter of protest was sent to the Church Times, but they refused to print it. This group then turned to the B.W., who printed the whole story and the letter in a two-column space which appeared as a paid advertisement. This article said, in part, "As its /the Church Times/ columns are thus closed to the 2,000 distinguished people against whom it has brought false charges, the Strength of Britain Movement is compelled, in the interests of honest journalism, free criticism, and fair play, to publish the letter below."[1]

Nicoll was not to be side-tracked, however cogent the scheme. Lloyd George thought the solution lay in State Purchase. Nicoll could not see how this would help the war effort, especially if millions of pounds would have to be spent in buying up all of the existing stocks. He set forth all of his arguments in a leader,[2] and from that issue on, intermittently, he attacked State Purchase in all its phases. He got others, also, to write articles and leaders on State Purchase, e.g. Principal Denney, in the issue of January 18, 1917. During 1917 the B.W. fought it relentlessly, urging prohibition instead, until in May 9, 1918, Nicoll's "War Notes" announced, "State Purchase is Dead." The reports of the Committee on State Purchase had been issued and many

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1 B.W., December 7, 1916.
2 B.W., May 6, 1915.

believed the defeat was in a way due to Nicoll and the B.W.. "And it was partly due to his opposition that this plan /State Purchase/ failed to take practical shape."[1] At least he alone, to a great extent, fought the battle with L.G. and the Government. Riddell claims that Lloyd George asked the editors of the Daily News, Daily Chronicle, Manchester Guardian, Liverpool Post, and Westminster Gazette to discuss his plan to purchase the drink trade before he announced it publicly, and all but the Chronicle acquiesced. L.G. told the editors, "Mr. Gladstone tried to deal with the drink question without buying out the trade. Surely we cannot expect to accomplish what he failed to do!"[2] But Riddell goes on to say that the Nonconformists were bitter concerning the proposed State purchase of the liquor trade. He claimed that W.R.N. and Dr. Clifford, and others were vowing vengeance.[3] In the end it seems they won. In a letter Nicoll wrote he refers to this.

> The Prime Minister sent for me three weeks ago and told me that State Purchase was dead. I asked whether this applied to the present session or to future sessions. He answered, "To all sessions, as far as I am concerned." He also informed me of the resolution of the Government to discontinue the extra grant for brewing.[4]

But L.G. and W.R.N. soon saw things alike and the war ended with both of them advocating prohibition.

As a minister and editor of a religious journal Nicoll gained great political power. He first came to the front as a political power when he turned his organ of sturdy Liberalism against the extravagance of the Progressive party on the London County Council, and "undoubtedly helped to bring about the defeat inflicted on that party."[5] Mr. Chamber-

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1 Darlow, op. cit., p. 243.
2 Riddell's War Diary, p. 77.
3 Ibid, p. 246.
4 Letter from Nicoll to Mr. Guthrie, March 26, 1918, quoted in Darlow, p. 272.
5 Birmingham Mail, May 5, 1923.

lain was at one time Sir William's political hero, but when Protection lured the Birmingham leader from the path of political virtue, Nicoll transferred his allegiance to Lloyd George. As a politician, his principal success was in helping to mould Lloyd George and Winston Churchill in the days of their political infancy. During the war, Lloyd George had no more powerful support in the Press than in the British Weekly.[1] Nicoll's admiration for, and implicit belief in Lloyd George began early in his career and never diminished, for he regarded him as the saviour of his country. The present study is not so much concerned with politics as it is with religious journalism, but notice should be taken of the way in which Nicoll used his religious weekly to campaign on behalf of his ideals which, except for State Purchase, either coincided with, or were formed in consultation with Lloyd George. This relationship began modestly but grew with the years. In 1904, L.G. wrote Nicoll, "We cannot do without your powerful influence."[2] In 1907, he wrote Nicoll (October 6th) about the article in the B.W. "which changed men of Wales full of revolt." In (June 6) 1909, he thanked Nicoll for his article in the B.W. which was "a real battle cry and will help enormously at this juncture." In 1910, he wrote (February 28) "I read your letter to the Cabinet and it served a very useful purpose . . . I hope you will not mind my having done so." And in 1913 (April 3), he commended Nicoll on his powerful article in the B.W..[3] Nicoll wrote to his wife in 1907 and said, "/Had/ lunch with Lloyd George who is most anxious to come to terms with me on Welsh Disestablishment."[4] Lord Riddell mentions his first meeting of Nicoll in

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1 Also see below, Chapter VIII.
2 Unpublished letter L.G. to W.R.N., February 20, 1904.
3 The above letters are all unpublished. They are now in the possession of Lady Robertson Nicoll.
4 C.R. Nicoll, Under the Bay Tree, p. 190.

1908. "He is a remarkable old boy. His memory is wonderful, and he is a brilliant talker. He has great political influence and is much sought after by Liberal ministers."[1] Riddell's diaries show this influence.

> Had dinner with Nicoll, /December 11, 1908/ who said he had had a letter from Runciman, Minister for Education, written at 12 o'clock on the night previous to the day when the Education Bill was withdrawn, in which he said, "I still have hope." Next day he received a telegram from Runciman saying, "The Bill is dead." Quick work. They are evidently much afraid of Nicoll.[2]

But Riddell had even more to say about Nicoll's influence on L.G. than about Nicoll's influence in general. One entry (December 29, 1912) reads, "He /L.G./ said, "Robertson Nicoll is the greatest living journalist from a polemical standpoint. It is a pity he is too old to edit a daily paper. He would make it an enormous power."[3] One more illustration of this will suffice. Lloyd George had been considering accepting the post of Minister of Munitions, but conditions within the Munitions Department were very unsatisfactory to L.G., and he asked Nicoll's advice as to whether he should resign if these conditions were not rectified as was promised him upon his acceptance of the post. Riddell says,

> Nicoll (most unwisely I think) had advised him in the affirmative. L.G. gave Nicoll, so he /Nicoll/ said, a most depressing account of the situation, including a statement by the P.M. to the effect that our trenches were inadequate and not to be compared with those of the French Army. Nicoll had written what I regard as an injudicious article in the British Weekly. Whether he has overstated what L.G. said, I do not know."[4]

L.G. later denied inspiring this article which some thought most unfortunate and prejudicial to L.G.. But Nicoll said that he had received hundreds of letters and telegrams approving his action. Later the situation within the Munitions Department became unbearable for L.G.. He

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1 Riddell, More Pages from My Diary 1908-14, p. 1.
2 Ibid, p. 13.
3 Ibid, p. 112.
4 Riddell, Lord Riddell's War Diary 1914-18, (June 9th, 1915), p. 102.

thought the management had been taken out of his hands and was in a poor condition. On October 29, 1915, he invited Riddell, Lord Reading, (the Lord Chief Justice), and Nicoll to a conference, and asked their advice - whether he should resign. Nicoll said that unless L.G. resigned he would be responsible for the mismanagement of affairs. The other two men did not agree.[1] Later (April 13, 1916) at another lunch at Riddell's attended by Nicoll, L.G. remarked, after again suggesting resignation,

> Now Sir William what is your opinion? Do you think I should go out? You will remember the interview we had in this house some time ago when you advised me to leave. I did not take your advice and I regret not doing so. But there is this to be said on the other side: Since then I have put munitions on a more satisfactory footing; the stuff is beginning to roll in. The Army are well supplied; General Haig, who is over here, says he has enough. That is something to have accomplished. Perhaps I did the right thing.[2]

Once again Nicoll advised him to go out if he could not carry out his task because of too much opposition. But later in the same conversation all agreed that L.G. should remain in the House of Commons and form, not an Opposition, but a party of Criticism. That same spring Kitchener's death left the War Office vacant. The Prime Minister had offered it to L.G.. Instead of resigning because of muddled affairs he now saw his chance to straighten out these affairs. Once again at a dinner at Riddell's house he asked Nicoll's opinion. Nicoll advised him,

> Mr. Minister, I think your position quite clear. You must accept the offer. Do not haggle about powers; you will later on get all the powers you want. Your appointment to the War Office will hearten the country and the Allies. The nation and the Army regard you as the only man capable of filling the position. If you refuse, you will occasion consternation and dismay. I implore you to accept the P.M.'s offer.[3]

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1 Darlow's account of this episode, (p. 253) based on Addison's Politics from Within, states that all three agreed L.G. should resign. Riddell, at whose house the conference was held, says that only Nicoll suggested resignation. Riddell and Lord Reading hoped he would not. See Riddell's War Diary, p. 130.

2 Riddell's War Diary, p. 170.

3 Ibid, p. 191.

Lloyd George was appointed Secretary of War shortly afterwards. Later (December 6, 1916) L.G. became Prime Minister and Nicoll redoubled his written support of him. There followed such leaders as: "Mr. Lloyd George's Conquest of England," (March 1, 1917); "Mr. Lloyd George and Strategy," (November 15, 1917); "The Premier's Vindication," (November 22, 19170; and after the Armistice was signed, "The Premier's War Record," (November 21, 1918). This latter was reprinted and sold in pamphlet form.

In recognition of his political and social services Nicoll was knighted (1909) and was created a Companion of Honour (1921).

CHAPTER VII

William Robertson Nicoll in the Education Struggle

The value of education had been instilled early into the life of William Robertson Nicoll. His father had started out in life as a teacher in his native Auchindoir. Nicoll himself taught several classes while he was working his way through the Free Church College at Aberdeen. He was a member of the local School Board during his three years at Dufftown. From his own experience he knew that the country's real need was for an expansion of the local areas controlled by the School Boards, every area under popular control, the discontinuance of inefficient schools, and the establishment of a system of secondary education by developing higher grade schools. By this means the brighter pupils could obtain all of the education that their ability allowed by being able to pass from one school to another.

In 1894, Robertson Nicoll gave voice in print to his opinions on education. It was in relation to the London School Board election of November of that year. A fierce contest raged between the Progressives and the Sacerdotalists. The former were led by Dr. Clifford and the latter by Mr. Athelstan Riley and Mr. Diggle. Speaking of this election in a leader Nicoll said,

> Free Churchmen have been taught in an unforgettable manner that in order to keep what they have secured they must fight the Sacerdotalists, and that when they fight the Sacerdotalists they are practically fighting the undivided clergy of the Church of England . . . . It cannot be denied that the militant energy of Nonconformity was for a time becalmed . . . . The sails seemed to hang heavily against the mast, and there was a lack of courage and ardour. Now thank God! it is made perfectly clear that the forces against us will never consent to an armistice. Those who believe in spiritual religion everywhere are rallying to the struggle. There is now a spirit of unity

> manifesting itself among Nonconformists. They see their dearest common possessions assailed, and they are marshalling themselves for a fight of which the issue is not doubtful. There are perils, no doubt, in such combats, but the great perils are to those who decline to take part in them.[1]

This leader seemed to foreshadow the great Passive Resistance Movement of 1902 to 1906 in which Nicoll was to play such an important part.

Nicoll was aware that Nonconformists would be serving the sacred cause of religious freedom best by putting up a determined fight against Sacerdotalism in the schools. He assured his followers that, "there will be difficulties, temporary reverses, anxieties and the rest, but there will be unspeakable compensations."[2] These words were just as true in the great Education conflict as they were when Nicoll put them on paper. He continued, "We shall know, as can only be known in the battle, what are the struggles, the successes, the hopes, the inheritance of the Church of Jesus Christ. He said He would be with us to the end of the world, and He will be as good as His word."[3]

The election was a great triumph for the Progressives which surpassed their fondest hopes. Those advocates of liberty won six seats and secured a large majority of votes. Their convictions would be upheld for the moment in any case, and what lay ahead would be dealt with as the threat arose.

The threat arose in the form of the Education Bill which was introduced in 1902. The history behind this Bill must not be forgotten. The development of a public educational system in Britain was as gradual as the development of democratic franchise, and more complicated. At the

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1 B.W., November 15, 1894.
2 Ibid.
3 Ibid.

beginning of the nineteenth century, it has been estimated, only one-fourth of the country's children attended any school, and little over half of them were in attendance at a school which could in any way be called efficient. (The various churches had established the only schools in existence for the poor.) It was in 1833 that the government began to make small grants annually to these schools. In 1839, inspection of them began. From then on the schools, with state grants and inspections, began gradually to improve in quality and number. So by 1870 the state deemed it necessary to enter the educational field itself and establish schools where the religious bodies had not done so. This was the beginning of the conflict between the Church of England and the Nonconformist Churches. The issue was complicated because the Free Churches (Nonconformists) were satisfied with the Bible teaching as proposed to be taught in the state school and they wanted this type of teaching established uniformly throughout the country. In opposition to this, the Church of England looked upon Bible teaching as necessary but wholly inadequate, and wanted to supplement it in their own schools with their more definite plan of religious education. For this plan they needed the financial assistance of the state for their schools. The Education Act of 1870 more or less favoured the Anglican view, which meant that in districts of one school only, which had already a Church of England school, the children with Nonconformist backgrounds were compelled to go to Anglican schools and receive Anglican religious instruction. The Act of 1870 supplied the schools but did not make attendance compulsory. That came in 1880, while 1891 saw the abolition of the small fees charged by many of the schools, except denominational schools, and the entire cost borne by the public. The Education Act of 1902 established the present

system of county secondary schools, which was as great a step forward in education as was the Act of 1870. But it was this Act of 1902 which irritated the Nonconformists. The Act granted additional state-aid to the Church of England elementary schools which would enable them to meet the increasing demands of educational efficiency. The prospect of this plus the insufficiency of Nonconformist schools, coupled with the previous grievances of the Nonconformists, crystallized into what became known as the great Education struggle.[1]

In some respects the history of the Education fight comprises the greatest episode in all of Nicoll's influential career. It was in his leader of April 3, 1902, just a few days after the Bill was introduced, that he proposed the instigation of the policy of passive resistance. As a Nonconformist editor he quite naturally considered the Bill from the standpoint of its relation to Nonconformists. He thought that the Bill, apart from the religious issues which it raised, was administratively inefficient and involved great expenditure. This Bill would put on a permanent basis all denominational schools at the ratepayer's expense. It was when the Nonconformists became aware that they would be charged through their rates to give full financial support to a religious propagandism which they had been fighting for a long time and which they had always conscientiously disapproved, that the realization came that something must be done. Now the children all over the country would have to attend schools permeated with a clerical atmosphere and ruled by a parish priest. Under such influence Nonconformist children would come to regard their own parents as heretics and apostates. The great majority of Non-

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1 For further details of educational history see H.C. Barnard, A Short History of English Education, (London, University of London Press, 1947). Passim.

conformist teachers would be barred from posts, and three-fourths of the training colleges would be closed to non-Church of England members. The only solution in fighting all this seemed to lie in passive resistance. In his leader Nicoll answered those who were wondering whether they ought simply to protest, yet submit and wait for a better day.

> We are conscious of the great responsibility which rests on anyone who recommends resistance to a measure passed by Parliament. In these things, however, Free Churchmen will, we venture to think be compelled to resist. Alderman George White, M.P., has expressed his opinion that the one effective way of fighting the battle is to bind ourselves by a solemn pledge to pay no school rate . . . . If this Bill is passed in its present form, we as ratepayers must allow our property to be seized for the school rate, but we cannot conscientiously pay it. The Free Church Council will, we trust, give a clear lead on this point. The Government ought to be warned promptly and plainly. There ought to be concerted action amongst all Nonconformists. The enemies of the Free Churches think that at present they can do as they please, and overbear by immense majorities anything that we can do in Parliament. It may be so, but even if we are defeated in Parliament our resources are not exhausted. We have taken no money from anyone to help in the teaching of our own denominational views. We cannot consent that our money should be applied to the teaching of religious views from which we vehemently dissent, without any real popular control or power of protecting our own interests. There is no occasion for excited talk, but for serious, deliberate warning. The responsibility of giving such warning is much less than the responsibility of withholding it.[1]

Thus it was that Alderman George White, M.P., of Norwich, was the real instigator of what became known as the "Passive Resistance Movement." But Nicoll in his leader laid the foundations for this movement, treating it as a duty of all Nonconformists. He was afraid that the Nonconformists would disperse their efforts in opposing the Bill rather than make a concerted move. His leader stated what concerted move would be most effective to take and he believed it to be passive resistance. He recalled that at Birmingham on June 5, 1871, Mr. Chamberlain

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1 B.W., April 3, 1902.

had said,

> Much as I love the cause of education, I love the principles of religious freedom more. (Great cheering.) Although I feel that the future prosperity and welfare, and perhaps even the future history of the country depend upon the speedy solution of this problem, yet I would rather retard this solution a little longer than imperil those great principles which are the groundwork of religious freedom, and the guarantees of religious and political life in this land.[1]

This was the keynote of Nonconformist resistance to the Education Bill.

Nicoll went on to say,

> We desire to avoid all exaggeration, but the more this Bill is looked at the more it will be seen that Mr. Channing is right when he says that it deals the deadliest blow to the very existence and future of Nonconformity itself, and will practically hand over the children of the nation to the clergy of the Churches of England and Rome.[2]

Nicoll believed that, if the Bill passed, the Church of England could come in wherever new schools were needed, and use the rates for the purpose of laying hold of others.

As educationalists, Nonconformists found much to criticise, but Nonconformity was not bound to any particular theories of education. So long as religious liberties were not touched Nonconformists would take their own sides on such questions as whether women should have a share in the management of a national system of education, and on the size of the areas to be marked out for educational purposes. W.R.N. felt that there was a danger that in the discussion of the thousand questions which the Bill raised the main issue might be overlooked. He was convinced that the Church of England was fighting for the saturation of those schools with her own peculiar tenets. "Not what is common to Christians, but what belongs to herself - the most isolated Church in Christiandom - is what she seeks to teach."[3] This teaching, he felt sure, was not to be just

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1 B.W., April 3, 1902.
2 Ibid.
3 Ibid.

for an hour or half-hour a day because the Guardian, the Church of England's leading paper, had said that it was common agreement among Churchmen that religious education was not a matter of a religious half-hour a day, but of the tone and influence of the whole school day in a school in which religion was the chief element. It was this statement that alarmed Nicoll, because the Bill would force Nonconformists to send their children to those schools and to pay rates for their maintenance. Any conscience clause, apart from other objections, would obviously be useless in these circumstances. He admitted that a small proportion of managers were appointed to control secular education in the schools. These managers would, he claimed, either support or oppose the clergy. If they supported them, things would be as they were, but if they opposed them, they would be impotent. No matter what they opposed they would be defeated, and their presence would merely add a new element of bitterness to the life of the parish. In other words, over a large part of England the Anglican clergy were to be practically the sole education authority, with unlimited power of rating. He appealed to all who had carefully studied the Bill whether or not his description of its provisions was in the smallest degree exaggerated.

He faced squarely the objections to the proposal that Nonconformists should not pay rates, that they must offer a passive resistance, allowing their property to be sold, but refusing to hand it over themselves. Replying to these objections Nicoll stated,

> If our consciences are invaded by these proposals we ought in fairness to ourselves, and in fairness to our opponents, to make this known at the earliest possible moment. If we do not, they will be entitled to say that our conscience had nothing to do with the matter; the Government will have a right to answer: "If your consciences were touched, if you could not pay the rates under these conditions, you should have told us at the beginning."[1]

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1 Ibid.

This leader excited widespread attention.

Later in an interview, the editor of the B.W. said that the proposal was certainly not a threat. It was only a statement of what must arise if the Bill became law. "Suppose," said Dr. Nicoll, "you saw a man going towards a precipice, it would not be a threat if you ran up and warned him of the consequences of proceeding in that direction."[1]

However, many felt that the "man" in Nicoll's illustration was not headed for a precipice but simply standing still, faced by a charging bull. Periodicals as different in viewpoint as the Christian World and the Daily Telegraph united in their opposition to the suggestions made by Nicoll in the B.W.. But these, for the most part, seemed to overlook completely the Nonconformists' viewpoint and their treatment in the Bill.

Many there were that backed up the British Weekly's stand. The Methodist's leader, the Rev. Hugh Price Hughes, admitted that passive resistance was extreme advice to give and that it should be given only with a deep sense of responsibility and a determination, at all hazard, to set a personal example, if necessary in defying a wicked law.

> We have never before known an occasion in political controversy when responsible journalists and ecclesiastical leaders would have been justified in going to such a length. But we must say that in our deliberate judgment an unprecedented occasion has now arisen when such men as Dr. Nicoll and Dr. Parker are fully justified in giving religious Nonconformists this advice. We desire to take our place at their side, and should the odious necessity arise we will do as they are going to do and we will urge all whom we can influence to act in the same way in the interests of justice. Protestantism, and the sacred rights of conscience. The time may come within the next two months when those who are really in the Apostolical Succession must say in the language of St. Peter and the other Apostles, "We must obey God rather than men."[2]

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1 The Westminster, April 10, 1902.
2 Methodist Times, April 8, 1902.

Dr. Guinness Rogers, writing in the Times, said that "nothing could be more impolitic than to dismiss as hysterical and unpractical" the proposal to refuse to pay the school-rate advocated in the British Weekly.[1]

Nicoll, himself, had no illusions as to what he was advocating. He was advocating that which he thought to be the only course after much reflection on the situation. He knew his opposition, and he had no doubt what the results might be. His early leaders despaired of the Bill being defeated in Parliament. He did not want to defy the law, for all through Nonconformist history - from 1662 to 1902 - Nonconformists, while struggling for religious liberty and equality, had respected constitutional methods of agitation for the redress of grievances. But now only one course seemed clearly open, and he was heartened by those who had aligned themselves with him. R. W. Dale also fought the education battle month by month, from his editorial chair in the Congregationalist. The protagonist of the opposition in the House of Commons was David Lloyd George; outside he was seconded by a Nonconformist minister named Dr. Clifford, who preached the doctrine of passive resistance. Dr. Clifford was the leading platform spokesman of the movement backed up by such able speakers as the Rev. C. Silvester Horne, Mr. Lloyd George, Mr. Campbell and Mr. Meyer. Dr. Nicoll himself was in great demand. "Not one has had larger, more united or more enthusiastic meetings than the editor of the British Weekly."[2] But Nicoll's greatest usefulness was through his writings. He represented the movement in the press as Dr. Clifford did in the pulpit, although with some marked differences. In part these differences

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1 Quoted in the Westminster, April 10, 1902.
2 J.T. Stoddart, op. cit., p. 145.

arose from temperament, for he did not belong, as Dr. Clifford did, to the fervid, prophetic type which scorns compromise at any point; in part, they arose from the difference in medium.

The British Weekly and its editor had gained considerable influence and prestige by this time and so Nicoll's pronouncements had a strong influence on the Free Churches, from the beginning of the passive resistance movement. He also wrote signed articles for the Daily Mail (April 11, 1902) and the Contemporary Review (November, 1902), both of which were leader length.

The first real demonstration was held on April 15th at St. James's Hall, where ardent feeling was expressed at each mention of passive resistance. Hugh Price Hughes made his first public speech for the movement, in which he spoke as he had written, in favour of such action. His speech was reported in full in the B.W. of April 17th. Hughes was generous enough in his feelings to believe that the great majority of the Anglican laity and also the greater part of their clergy were not in favour of the Bill. He also said,

> But if the Government persists in its bellicose attitude, if, like the noble Dutch, we are driven to our last ditch, we will innundate the whole of England with our unchangeable refusal. Our watchword will be, "You may spoil our goods; you shall not stain our conscience."[1]

This meeting was one of the first of a long series of meetings held throughout the British Isles in protest against the Bill.

The second reading of the Bill on May 8th 1902? was carried by 402 votes against 165 or a majority of 237.

In his leader of May 13th Nicoll summed up his view of the majority vote by saying that the government had no intention of making any real

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1 B.W., April 17, 1902.

concessions. He said that Nonconformists did not provoke this attack; they earnestly desired friendly relations with the Church of England, and co-operation in the immense task of winning back the multitude at present alienated from churches of every kind. But they would defend their freedom to the last. He was certain that if the worst came to the worst the greater proportion of them would resist the school rate, just as their fathers resisted the Church rate, and for the same reason. He was encouraged by the rallying to the cause of liberty which had already occurred in all of the great towns of England. He also believed that the Liberal party had been drawn together in a new way, and that the Liberal Unionists were committing themselves anew to their previous allies.

This latter fact became more apparent as time went on. A few months afterwards Mr. Chamberlain wrote,

> I told you that your Education Bill would destroy your own party. It has done so . . . . If we go on, we shall only carry the Bill with great difficulty, and when it is carried we shall have sown the seeds of an agitation which will undoubtedly be successful in the long run.[1]

In the middle of May the Congregational Union met to hold a conference on the Education Bill. Several brave and daring speeches were made advocating passive resistance.[2] The decision of this Conference carried considerable weight with Nonconformists as the Congregationalists were an influential body among them.

One of the strange elements of the issue was the stand taken by the National Union of Teachers. Immediately after the Bill was introduced, 2,000 delegates, representing 45,000 members, assembled at Bristol. The

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1 Letter from Mr. Chamberlain to Duke of Devonshire, September 22, 1902, quoted in Bernard Holland, The Life of Spencer Compton, Eighth Duke of Devonshire, (London: Longmans, 1911), p. 136.

2 For further notes on this Conference see, Peel, These Hundred Years, pp. 365 f.

opinion of so large a body of experts on the Education Bill had been eagerly awaited. Mr. Croft of Nottingham, the chairman, was in favour of giving the quietus to the village five-membered School Boards, but believed the proposal to eliminate the School Board system in the great county boroughs, where it had immensely raised the standard of primary education, would cause intense resentment. He mentioned incidentally that, of 31,800 certificated teachers in the nation's schools, nearly 24,000 were serving in Board schools. He rather made light of the religious difficulty, but said it was amazing to think of the millions of public money what had been handed over to private and irresponsible managers. After a long debate, which disclosed wide differences of opinion, the assembly, by way of compromise, passed a resolution which, while approving the principle of local authorities controlling all education in wide areas, expressed the opinion that the permissive clauses must be struck out, and that additional grants from the Imperial Exchequer were necessary. An amendment that the local education authority should be directly elected was defeated.[1]

On June 12, 1902, a large representation of Free Churchmen had an audience with Mr. Balfour, the creator of the Bill. Principal Fairbairn of Mansfield College, Oxford, was the spokesman who represented their viewpoint to the statesman. Nicoll, reporting on the meeting, stated that he closed his speech with the words that were to become the byword of the conflict, "We will not submit." "Mr. Balfour treated his deputation with good-humoured indulgence, instructed Principal Fairbairn on theology, and as for the Bill, assumed the attitude of an injured innocent."[2]

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1 From the report of the National Union of Teachers meeting in the Staffordshire Advertiser, April 5, 1902.

2 B.W., June 19, 1902.

Following in his uncle's footsteps Mr. Balfour became Prime Minister in July of 1902, following the resignation of the ailing Salisbury. The new Prime Minister's speech announced in no uncertain terms that he would not concede so much as a word to the Nonconformists. Looking back now, it seems strange that the Government never consulted the Nonconformist leaders when they framed the Bill and that their criticisms were ignored. Changes were introduced, which seemed to please the country squires, but not a single concession was made to the Free Churches. In fact they were told quite often by the Premier that the Bill left them better off than they had a right to expect. Did Balfour think that the Nonconformists were bluffing or did he think them too weak numerically to be of any consideration? This is all the more surprising when one realises that Balfour was a Scottish Presbyterian who should have been familiar with the history of the spirit which fired the Free Churchmen's forefathers with courage to refuse the Church rate in the cause of freedom, some going so far as to suffer distraint and imprisonment for their stand. Surely he did not think that that courage had waned. As for the numbers of Nonconformists: "In 1700, Nonconformists were to the Church of England as one to twenty-two; in 1800, as one to eight; and in 1900 as one to one. Their churches are prosperous, numerous and liberal, and within the last five years . . . raised enormous centenery funds."[1] It seemed simply that the Government was convinced that the Nonconformists were not serious.

Through the leaders of the B.W. the vital points of the situation were kept before its readers. The progress of the Bill had been watched with great anxiety. The basic principles involved were kept before the Nonconformists during the summer months. When, on July 31st, Nicoll's

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1 J. Stoddart, op. cit., pp. 152 f.

leader "Set Down My Name, Sir"[1] asked for a response, hundreds of men answered the call. It was this response that assured W.R.N. of the need to organize. Principal Fairbairn was opposed to organization but Nicoll did not want to make the same mistakes twice. He recalled how the Church rate fight dragged on for thirty-four years because of legal mistakes which could have been avoided by sound advice. He wanted to organize to prevent errors in points of law and to protect and help the working men who had wholeheartedly entered the cause. Many had written him asking what steps should be taken in order to be most effective. The leader had stated that, "it will help us very much if as many friends as possible are ready and willing to go to prison. To that it must come, and the sooner the better."[2] They became organized.

The crux of the whole affair, the turning point in the movement, hinged on Clause 7. This Clause completely eliminated the popular control of the Schools, giving the priest the entire field. Nicoll called the attention of the Free Churches to the fact that under this clause it was not open for Nonconformist ministers to enter the schools for even half-an-hour a day to teach the children religion. They were to be taught religion by a member of the Church of England, elected by Churchmen, and bound to make religion as he conceived it, the chief element in his teaching. This meant that Nonconformist parents had no power to have religion taught to their children as they believed in it. They were to be compelled by the law to have their children taught a religion which they rejected, and they were to be compelled by the law to pay for the teaching of that religion.

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1 This was the same name given to his leader in August, 1914, which was later published in pamphlet form.

2 B.W., July 31, 1902.

With the passing of this clause many who had previously been reluctant eagerly joined the movement now that hope of compromise had disappeared. The alarming thing was that the clause had passed through the House of Commons with a large majority. The Central Committee called a meeting of the local Free Church Councils to discuss the situation. These local councils had been asked whether or not they advised a general enrolment of those who felt bound to refuse payment of the rates since the Bill had become a law. The replies started to come in on September 11th and 412 local councils, out of 489, registered their favouring enrolment.[1] It was now evident that a unanimous decision would be given for passive resistance. Many prominent townspeople and School Board members throughout the country signed the roll. Nonconformity had been aroused to new life and vigour; ". . . the Bill rallied the Free Churches as they had not been rallied for a long time."[2] Many veterans who could recall the Church rate conflict seemed amazed at the zealous and enthusiastic response given to the new movement.[3]

The Congregational Union met in Glasgow in the autumn of 1902 when Dr. Fairbairn spoke on "Congregationalists and the Education Question." Not only this assembly but, "every Assembly for some years had a resolution recording 'emphatic condemnation' of the 'iniquitous' Act, with its provisions 'which encourage hypocrisy, restrict liberty and perpetuate political injustice.'"[4] It was at this meeting that a rider was carried which said,

> The Assembly desires, in accordance with declarations made in years past, to give expression to its conviction that there can be no final

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1 From speech by Nicoll reported in Sussex Daily News, March 11, 1903.
2 Peel, op. cit., p. 364.
3 See letters to editor, B.W., September 25 and October 2, 1903.
4 Peel, op. cit., pp. 364 f.

> solution to the religious difficulty in national education until the State lays aside all claim to interfere, either by support or control, with religious education, and freely leaves to parents and Christian churches the responsibility and opportunities for the provision of the same.[1]

It was also unanimously agreed that the Union would advise all members to refuse to pay the rate. The Baptist Union Meetings at Birmingham were just as unanimous over an identical proposal. At the same time the National Free Church Council's General Committee moved to make a roll of the names and addresses of persons whose conscience forbade them to pay the rates.

Nicoll's insistence on some kind of organization, representing all groups and equipped with sound legal advice, took shape as the National Passive Resistance Committee. This was a committee attached to the National Council of Evangelical Free Churches, and it undertook the direction of the campaign. Dr. Clifford was chairman. Through this Committee meetings were held and leagues formed at Manchester, Leichester, Nottingham and Swindon. The number of committees who had pledged themselves to the central committee already totalled four figures. This formation of a Committee was coupled with the publishing by Nicoll of a catechism on the Education Bill. It had an enormous response, and distributed in the hundreds of thousands, it formed the basis of innumerable speeches and sermons.

A glowing tribute was paid to William Robertson Nicoll in a speech made by Lord Rosebery on the Education controversy, when he was in Edinburgh in November of 1902.

> Although the Government have by their action lashed the seas of religious controversy into a furious storm, I am not sure that even now it is hopeless to expect that some solution of the religious

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1 Ibid, p. 365.

> trouble may be found by some such conference as I have sketched out. And I have some ground for my belief. I see that in the "British Weekly" - (cheers) - Dr. Robertson Nicoll, who is, I believe, the editor, and who is a man not merely of great ability but of the widest relations with leading Nonconformists, says that Nonconformists will accept the Scottish system, our system here, as a solution of the religious difficulty. Well, if that be so, it is a solution from which the Church of England should not shrink. It is a solution which would adapt the working of the religious question to the needs of every locality, and it would have the not inconsiderable advantage of putting the parochial system in Scotland and in England as nearly as possible on a uniform basis. I say that there is a gleam of hope in the suggestion of Dr. Robertson Nicoll, and if the Government is composed of statesmen, and if they really wish to settle this question on a broad, a permanent, and a national basis, they should take heed of the suggestion and see whether they cannot bring it into some practical proposal. (cheers.)[1]

Nicoll commented on this speech in his B.W. leader of November 25th, saying that he wished it were possible to talk over the prospect of the Scottish system being used in England. He knew that the English Nonconformists would accept it, if only because it seemed the only solution within their immediate reach. He was convinced it would solve the situation for four reasons. First, English education would be administered by popular bodies elected for that end. Second, all sectarian tests for teachers would be abolished. Third, there would be practical undenominational religious teaching established throughout the entire country. Fourth, adequate protection would be assured for all the minorities. But he was certain that for these very reasons the High Church party would oppose it to its end.

Near the end of 1902, Lord Rosebery spoke to the Scottish Liberal Club. Had the leaders of the Free Church needed any justification for their actions they would have taken heart by his Lordship's words.

> I have said and I reiterate that if Nonconformity remains passive under this Bill, Nonconformity is politically dead. Let me go one

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1 The Scotsman, November 17, 1902.

> step further. If the country receives this legislation as a part of its political system and without protest, my belief is that Liberalism will be dead.[1]

With the beginning of a new year (1903) the conflict steadily gathered momentum and began to overshadow all other issues. Nicoll was called upon to make numerous speeches. Most of these speeches, being in various places, were repetitions of the same basic themes stated so often in the leaders of the B.W. at the very beginning of the struggle. But each meeting received his utterances with renewed vigour, and the new approach he gave to the fundamental issues stirred his hearers to new determination and resolve. "Since Mr. Lloyd George is unable to support 'Passive Resistance,' Nonconformists look more than ever to Dr. Robertson Nicoll for leadership."[2] "Dr. Nicoll is really the force behind all this agitation, as Lord Rosebery recognised when he quoted Dr. Nicoll in his most important speech during the Education agitation."[3] During the first half of that year he gave speeches in Brighton, Leeds, Barnet, Birmingham, Manchester, Liverpool, Sheffield, Leicester and, in fact, nearly every large centre in England.

These were stirring speeches, and to read them is to feel something of the fire of passion for the cause that Nicoll had fanned into being from the tiny flame which first existed. In Leeds the people were stirred by such words as follow,

> If they failed in that movement . . . Nonconformity was dead . . . because it would have shamed its past and soiled its future. If they said they could not practise passive resistance, and found reasons for it, were they entitled to boast about their fathers any more. Their fathers would be a rebuke and a reproach to them, and they would not be fit to take their sacred names into their polluted lips. He thought of Nonconformity as an eagle that fought for her young

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1 Quoted in J.T. Stoddart, op. cit., p. 158.
2 "William Robertson Nicoll," Liverpool Post, March 4, 1903.
3 Report of the meeting of Free Church Council, Brighton, Sussex Daily News, March 11, 1903.

> until there was blood upon her breast. Personally he received this freedom and these convictions from his father. He knew the sacrifice it involved, living as he did beside it, and he wanted to be able to do the same for his own son, that he should not blush for his father (applause). If the battle is long, and we do not live to see the victory, what then? Our fathers taught us what to do in that case, when they faced exile and imprisonment and death for the sake of their principles. They taught us to die with courage undaunted, with faith uncrushed, and with our faces to the foe (loud and continued applause).[1]

After this short but powerful speech the Chairman of the meeting, (the inauguration of the Citizen's League of Leeds) concluded by calling upon all who wished to join the Passive Resistance League to stand up. Some hundreds, and among them many women, at once responded to the invitation, and the Rev. Thomas Nightingale offered prayer on their behalf.

Most of the speeches followed this type and pattern. For the most part, they were condensed or reviewed in the British Weekly. Nicoll drew large crowds whenever he spoke because his presence was of special interest in view of the fact that he shared with Dr. Clifford the distinction of having made passive resistance a movement. He continually reminded the people that without passive resistance there was, humanly speaking, no hope of the Act ever being repealed. In his speech at the Town Hall in Barnet, May 28, 1903, he said that he himself would not pay the rates. He told them that personally he should not like to have his books sold, but he should survive it, and he should have a certain joy in it. He was quite willing to go to gaol, he said, because he had not had a real holiday in seventeen years.

Some of the leaders of the movement, including Nicoll, found complications in their own individual cases because they were exempt from paying the rate. Dr. Fairbairn, of Oxford, found that a legal difficulty

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1 "The Education Rate Agitation," Yorkshire Daily Observer, May 6, 1903.

might arise in his case, as being in a college he had scarcely the opportunity of directly paying the rate. Nicoll, living in London, would not have had the opportunity of refusing the rate, which did not affect the metropolis. To overcome this, he planned to take a cottage in the country. No true "register" paid the rates. The counties and county boroughs in Wales went so far as to refuse to put the Act into effect. This led to the passing in 1904 of an Education (Local Authorities Default) Act, which stated that if any authority failed to make adequate grants for maintaining their efficiency to the voluntary schools in its area, the Board of Education could deduct from the grant payable to it such sums as were needed for the voluntary schools, and these sums would be paid over direct to the managers. Naturally, this caused widespread dissent and for awhile it looked as though the whole educational system of Wales was in danger of being thrown into chaos. Again Balfour stood his ground and the Welsh councils were compelled to yield. By the end of 1905 the Act was practically everywhere in force.

Nicoll made it clear that his speeches were not political speeches. He said that it was no pleasure to have to stump the country. "He wished to say that he was not standing there as a politician. He had never addressed a political meeting in his life. He did not know whether he ought to feel proud or ashamed of that."[1] Because Nonconformists resisted the rates it did not mean they were disloyal. Nicoll claimed that passive resisters were loyal to the backbone; none said with more sincere heart and soul "God save the King"; and the King himself knew the loyalty of these people.

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1 "Passive Resistance in Birkenhead," Birkenhead News, September 25, 1903.

> When the passive resistance movement began, a great many people talked about it being anarchical, and quoted, strangely enough, the text which was the very watchword of the movement. "Render unto Caesar the things that are Caesar's," they said, but was it not also "and unto God the things that are God's?" (applause). They admitted in their own argument the contention of Nonconformists that were not Caesar's - (applause). Nonconformists were law-abiding citizens.[1]

No one in the movement expected a hasty ending. At Birkenhead he had said, "Nobody should join the movement who was not prepared to see it through. For himself, he had prepared for it to last his life; and they must all make preparation."[2] In its more intense aspects it lasted several years; temporary relief came in 1906 but some historians[3] think that it has not yet disappeared entirely but has just died down in the course of years.

In the first years of the struggle many people were distrained upon and even imprisoned, but they all seemed to be united through the pages of the B.W.. Mr. Thomas Charles Smith, who has been called the first passive resister, lived as a farmer in a small hamlet among the hills near Wicksworth. He was asked how he had become connected with the movement. His answer was, "Well, you see, I read the British Weekly, and I was aware of pretty well all that was going on. Long ago I made up my mind what I should do when it came to the point. I never said much about it, but I shall pay no sectarian rate."[4] Those who suffered and who sought comfort in their suffering in the columns of the B.W. were seldom disappoint-

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1 The exact reference has been lost, but this portion of Nicoll's speech appeared in a dateless portion of a Hull paper found in Nicoll's effects.

2 Birkenhead News, September 25, 1903.

3 See Trevelyan, British History in the Nineteenth Century and After (1782-1919), (London: Longman, Green and Co., 1947), p.. 428 f. and H.C. Barnard, A Short History of English Education (1760-1944), (London: University of London Press, 1947), p. 251.

4 Quoted in Stoddart, op. cit., p. 170.

ed. They were constantly in the editor's mind. Not only was there news of those who were being mistreated for conscience's sake but there were also sermon leaders of comfort. In 1905 one such sermon leader, "The Blessing of Persecution," mentioned the suffering of the Nonconformists.

> The beginning of the twentieth century has brought Free Churchmen to a new time in the good fight of faith wherein they continually struggle. In England, many thousands of Nonconformists have appeared before the magistrates to be treated as criminals. Many of our most honoured Christian ministers and laymen have been imprisoned again and again. In all probability there are many others to follow them. They have been put to this suffering on account of their refusal to submit to a law that violates their conscience, a law which, by the admission of many who voted for it, is not just, and cannot last. From Wales, we have continual tidings of revival and revolt. A new spiritual life has awakened in the hills and valleys, and at the same time the people, headed by their legally-appointed Councils are resisting, at great cost, an attempt at coercion in the name of an alien Church. In Scotland, the United Free Church has passed through a year of unprecedented trial - of trial which has been nobly and devoutly borne, but which will leave an abiding mark upon those who have suffered it.[1]

He goes on to tell that the effect of persecution and of accepted suffering is life. It was a plea for aid and companionship in the struggle; for new members to join the conflict.

Those who absolutely refused the payment of the rates were the backbone of the movement. Many wanted to be identified with the cause in which they believed but were unwilling to make the sacrifice. These refused to pay only that proportion of their rates which they had estimated would be used to sustain denominational instruction in the schools. Warrants of distraint were issued, and a clock, or a silver tea-tray, which had been selected by the family for that purpose, was removed by the police and then sold at auction. It was claimed that often the distrained article was bought back by the resister, or someone acting as his agent, and kept handy until the next distraint, when the process was repeated.

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1 B.W., June 16, 1905.

Winston Churchill called this type of resistance "pantomimic martyrdom."[1] But as in all conflicts there were friends and enemies of the movement and there were bound to be "rumours of rumours." Many harsh words resounded from those in favour of the Bill. The Church Times, the organ that reflected with great fidelity the prevailing spirit amongst the Church of England clergy, had called Dr. Clifford a heathen, and the editor of the Christian World later said, "I have always felt that this lapse of respect for law and order set a precedent for the more violent defiances which followed in the Women's Suffrage campaign and the Ulster Rebellion against Irish Home Rule."[2]

But this movement was not a "rebellion" or a civil riot but a protest and, whether the result was imprisonment or just "pantomimic martyrdom," it brought to the fore fully and forcibly the grievances of the Nonconformists. To attribute future rebellions and riots to this movement is to ignore the true history of the Nonconformists. The whole history of English Nonconformity was the history of resistance; it was the history of obedience on the one side to the law of God, and of resistance on the other side to the law of man when that law crossed the law of God.

> In that resistance they knew that their fathers were willing to and did face exile, imprisonment, and death . . . that in 25 years after the rejection he believed there were some five thousand Nonconformists who died in prison, while it was computed that Nonconformists were fined during that period to the extent of sixteen million pounds. Let them consider what that was in the England of that day with its limited resources and small population. All the history of Nonconformity had been of that tenor, and yet Sir William Anson in the House of Commons dared to say that the conscience of Nonconformists had been a pampered

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1 Quoted in Arthur Porritt, More and More of Memories, (London: George Ellen & Unwin Ltd., 1947), p. 78. This type of payment is also mentioned in J. Stoddart, My Harvest of the Years, p. 142.

2 Porritt, op. cit.

> conscience. Pampered how? Pampered by Test Acts. Five-mile Acts, Corporation Acts, and he did not know what other forms of martyrdom. That was, it seemed to him, the temper of many people in these days. They were saying to the Nonconformists: "Be thankful you are not in the pillory; be thankful that you can keep your ears on; be thankful we allow you to go unmolested to your little Bethels, and don't ask for any more." Was half the English worshipping nation to submit to that?[1]

The indignation aroused by the Act and the powerful opposition of the passive resisters had much to do with the Liberal victory at the General Election of 1906. But the unprecedented Liberal majority in the House of Commons did little for the hopes of those who thought that now their worries were over. The new President of the Board of Education, Augustine Birrell, the son of a Baptist minister, introduced a Bill in 1906, which implied the abolition of public aid to voluntary schools. The only real concession was that "special religious instruction" might be given in such schools on not more than two mornings a week. This Bill was so amended by the House of Lords that the Government withdrew it. McKenna, Birrell's successor, tried an even more drastic step to solve the educational problem along similar lines but it, too, proved abortive. It had been met by bitter opposition from the extremists of both sides, further complicated by the fact that the Nonconformists themselves were divided. Another factor was that the powerful National Union of Teachers resented the intrusion into the elementary schools of any denominational teachers. The battle dragged on, the House of Lords rejecting measure after measure sent to them by the House of Commons. Space given to it in the British Weekly began to diminish as other controversies, such as the Land Scheme and Home Rule, demanded attention.

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1 Passive Resistance Speech by Nicoll, Birkenhead News, September 25, 1903.

However, Passive Resistance had not been dropped. Nicoll wrote Lloyd George in March of 1914,

> I was in the chair at the Passive Resistance meeting. We had a noble gathering, fully a thousand. Clifford and Guttery and I made strong speeches. . . . We took the line of supporting the Government on condition that they gave us something to go to the country upon - that is, a single-school-area Bill of a strong sort. Clifford said that if this were done he and the rest of us would take the platform at the next General Election and fight as we did in 1906. Clifford said in his speech, "I have illimitable confidence in the Government," and Guttery and I took the same line. . . .[1]

Nicoll's time was always at a premium but he had given of himself unstintedly during this conflict. His assistant said that only those who were nearest to him had any conception of the vast amount of additional labour which he gladly undertook because he believed in the cause.

> Hours have been spent in conversation with local leaders, hundreds of letters of advice and encouragement have been sent to Free Church workers in every part of England . . . . hardly even a day has passed without his receiving appeals to speak at meetings.[2]

But with the new crisis brought about by the breaking out of war in 1914 passive resistance as a movement practically came to an end. Nicoll and all of his fellow Nonconformists put everything else in the background in order to unite more wholeheartedly with the rest of the nation in meeting their country's need in its time of peril.

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1 Letter from Nicoll to Lloyd George, March 14, 1914, quoted in Darlow, pp. 381 f.

2 J. Stoddart, op. cit., pp. 144 f.

CHAPTER VIII

The British Weekly in Two Wars

The thought of war never appealed to William Robertson Nicoll, for he knew what heartsche and suffering it could bring; but if he disliked war in the face of aggression he abhorred what was more commonly called pacificism.[1] His biographer and friend dramatically defends his views on this point.

> Nicoll found it difficult to tolerate doubters and shirkers. If young men pleaded that their own consciences would not allow them to draw the sword in any cause whatever, he pitied them when he believed that they were sincere. But he detested the heresy[2] of non-resistance. To him pacifism as a doctrine appeared not merely unchristian but immoral. He had nothing but scorn for sleek prosperous persons who quote the Sermon on the Mount to condemn all bloodshed, while they are busy laying up for themselves treasures on earth behind the shelter which soldiers must die to secure. All through the War Nicoll warned British Free Churchmen against the subtle falsehood of pacifism. And, on the whole, they stood like a rock. They came to see clearly that the War confronted every man with this alternative: he could use it either as an occasion for profiteering, or as an altar for sacrifice.[3]

Yet he hated war and was willing to avoid it if possible. This viewpoint he maintained all during his editorship. He first expressed his opinions on combat in the British Weekly in 1899 when the second Boer war was imminent.[4] In October of that year, the week before President Kruger's

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1 He differentiated between pacifists and conscientious-objectors. During the 1914-18 war he had praised many of the latter who though unwilling to take up arms to kill their fellowmen had volunteered to be stretcher-bearers at the front where unarmed they were often exposed to more risks than many of the combatants.

2 This word is annotated with the statement: "At the Reformation this heresy was explicitly condemned by every single Protestant Church in its Confession of Faith."

3 Darlow, William Robertson Nicoll, p. 237.

4 The first Boer war was declared in December, 1880, when the Boers rose in arms and two months later defeated a small British force on the boundaries of Natal. See Trevelyan, op. cit., p. 385.

ultimatum,

> Never was a war contemplated with more reluctance and misgivings than this. It is not too much to say that it is hated and loathed by all sensible and right-minded people . . . In all the long chapter of bungling there have been no worse blunders than those committed lately. There are dark shadows hanging over the Jameson raid, shadows that may yet be lifted. Whatever may be the result, we have evidence enough that Mr. Chamberlain's proceedings have been eminently unwise and eminently unpacific.[1]

He did admit, however, that the situation was altered in light of the offer which the British Government had sent to the Transvaal Government on September 8th. This offer seemed fair enough and was even highly praised by such journalistic champions of the Boers as the Star and the Daily Chronicle. But the historians appear more nearly right in saying, "On neither side were the negotiations carried on with a very earnest desire for peace."[2] Kruger, it seemed, was eager to fight, and refused the British offer, lengthening the negotiations until the time of the most favourable season for campaigning. When the British offer was refused Nicoll commented,

> Some would say that our Government, remembering the past, cannot afford to go back, even if it has asked too much, it cannot afford to seem to yield, watched as it is by a jealous world. We should never dream of taking that position, we should rather say that if our country is true to the right it can afford to disregard all the contumely of envious outsiders. But no one has laid his finger upon anything in our demands of September 8th which we are not entitled to ask, and which ought not to have been conceded.[3]

This view he maintained by quoting the opinion of a well-known American missionary stationed in Cape Town, who had written an article on the situation in a New York paper, the Independent. This missionary, the Rev. C. S. Morris, who because of his nationality would not be prejudiced

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1 B.W., October 6, 1899.
2 G.M. Trevelyan, British History in the Nineteenth Century, p. 420.
3 B.W., October 6, 1899.

in favour of Britain, felt that,

> The British citizens were ignored, abused, disfranchised in such a manner that they are in a chronic state of petition and remonstrance, while her own supremacy as the paramount power in South Africa is greatly menaced by the rich, populous and aggressive Dutch power that is growing up in the midst of her colonies, ill-treating her subjects, defying her suzerainty, seeking the sea, and eagerly trying to enter into alliances with some of the great Powers of Europe. And thus it happens that Mr. Kruger finds himself looking into the muzzles of English cannon. With rare tact he has staved off the evil day, but the end is now come.[1]

There were many, including other Nonconformist papers such as the Christian World and the Methodist Times, who thought that the South African war was unnecessary and should have been avoided. President Kruger was about seventy-five years old. Because of his age many thought his oppressive system would likely have ended with him. Valid as this argument may be if Kruger was determined to start a quarrel, any explaining would be rather futile. This was Nicoll's conjecture. He believed that if the Government made any concessions as to the main points, the end would be war, forcing Britain to fight at an extreme disadvantage, while their prestige would suffer throughout the world. He felt that no responsible statesman had the desire to interfere with the independence of the Republic.

> But we do not believe for a moment that after a war this independence would be respected. It is certain that the British public, which has been hovering on the brink of war with the Transvaal for so many years, would see the business through this time, and that the Boer power would totally disappear. No section of politicians in this country, whatever name they might assume, could possibly do anything to prevent this . . . . There are signs that the wiser among the Boers realise the position, and are throwing themselves into a fight which they knew to be desperate. Is it too late to assure them that while we are not afraid of battle, we are shrinking from it because we honestly desire to save them from committing suicide?[2]

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1 Quoted in B.W., October 6, 1899.
2 B.W., October 6, 1899.

The following week the Boer President sent his ultimatum to the Colonial Office. Nicoll printed this ultimatum by Kruger for his readers. It gave the Queen's Government thirty-six hours to withdraw all British troops quartered in territory immediately bordering the South African Republic; to recall all British troops sent to South Africa since June 1st, 1899, and to refrain from landing in South Africa any British troops which were then on the seas. In his leader of that week, October 13, 1899, Nicoll revised this ultimatum.

> Sober-minded people must deeply regret the necessity of war, but the overwhelming majority of them feel that war is now a necessity which cannot be evaded. It is impossible to lay too much stress on the fact that the whole situation was altered by the British note of September 8th where it was proposed to settle the grievances of the Uitlanders by the adoption of the franchise scheme, proposed in the Transvaal Note of August 19th, to settle questions of interpretations under the Convention by reference to arbiters, and to settle other points by friendly discussion. It was the unanimous judgment of this country, the judgment of Sir William Harcourt and Mr. Morley, to mention no more, that this offer should be accepted. It was not accepted. War has been deliberately chosen.[1]

On the previous Tuesday (October 7th) Parliament had assembled for a war session. The general opinion in the House of Commons seemed to be that, in the light of Kruger's ultimatum, even though the Government might have made blunders, it would be impossible for any Cabinet even to take Kruger's terms into consideration. The Liberal side of the House, led by Sir Henry Campbell-Bannerman, said that their members were not disposed to refuse the Government the money and power necessary for the swift and ultimate culmination of a war thus commenced. This policy, as advocated by the Liberal Leader, and by the great majority of the Liberal party, was the policy maintained by the British Weekly throughout the course of the war.

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1 B.W., October 13, 1899.

The beginning of the campaign saw many Boer successes. This was not surprising in view of the fact that the British entered the war with no plans prepared in advance, and that the troops immediately available on the spot were less than half of those under mobilization by the Boer republics. What was surprising was that they were not more successful. The British forces seemed to have had no conception of the Boer's quality as a fighter. In one week in December, 1899, which became known as "black week," all three relieving forces of the British were defeated. These set-backs caused Nicoll to write such a leader as, "We are baffled to fight better." His creed then was "The nation should be as one, - above all recrimination and taunting. Do the next thing, that is our business and let it be done in the true British spirit."[1] These defeats proved valuable lessons afterwhich the fighting was carried on in open order, ranging over the veldt in guerrilla skirmishes.

The gallant Boers were sincerely admired by Nicoll, and many times during the course of the war he had friendly talks with the ministers of the Dutch Reformed Church and other subjects of the Transvaal and the Orange Free State. Thus he was often in touch with the arguments of both sides. The enemy capital was occupied in the summer of 1900, but the guerrilla war dragged on two years more. It was the remarkable resistance of the Boer farmers, under real leadership, which proved thorns in the side of the Empire. These farmers, such efficient aids to enemy forces, did not wear uniforms, but were treated as regular combatants. To catch them, scattered as they were amongst the population which was dispersed over vast areas, it was thought necessary to destroy their farms, systemati-

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1 B.W., December 14, 1899.

cally burning them, and to concentrate their inhabitants, mostly women and children, in camps. Unfortunately, a great number of children and many women died there. This method did, however, exhaust all material means for further resistance, and the end came in May, 1902. Artillery played only a small part, and the great majority of the 20,000 who lost their lives in those three years of war died of typhoid fever.

Fighting to the limit of exhaustion under such conditions, might have been expected to create bitter memories, but little intentional cruelty had been perpetrated by either side. Instead of the hope of reconciliation being prevented, "statesmanship and good feeling, on the whole, triumphed over fear and revenge, though the deaths of the Boer children in the concentration camps could not quickly be forgotten."[1] It was the extremely high death rates in some of these camps that caused Campbell-Bannerman, the Liberal leader, to use the phrase "methods of barbarism." This denunciation aroused indignation throughout Britain, but it won a sympathy which later proved valuable among the Boers. By the Peace of Vereeniging the Boers laid down their arms and recognized the annexation of their republics. A gift of £3,000,000 to help in re-building the farms, and re-establishing the Boers, was looked upon as a generous action and helped the Boers to reconcile themselves to becoming British subjects. The Peace and material reconstruction had been effected by the Conservative Ministry. Under Campbell-Bannerman's leadership, the Liberal government of 1906 granted complete responsible self-government to the former enemy.

Peace reigned. The leaders of the B.W. once more became absorbed

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1 Trevelyan, op. cit., p. 422.

by the old issues of Erastianism, social problems, the liquor question, Disestablishment and Home Rule, interspersed sporadically with literature and preaching. But when new issues, the Education Struggle, "New Theology," strikes and the Irish troubles, had arisen, and Nicoll had, as usual, carefully chosen his side and supported it with acumen and vigour. Beneath the surface of events, there were stirrings of international unrest. In the summer of 1914 ominous rumblings were heard and on July 23rd Austria issued her ultimatum. Then for the next twelve days events moved very fast. Austria declared war on Serbia; Russia declared war on Austria; Germany declared war on Russia and France, and Germany entered Belgium. Then Britain sent an ultimatum to Germany demanding the evacuation of Belgium by midnight of August 4th. Midnight arrived and as the ultimatum was unanswered, Britain was at war. In the leader, "United We Stand," of the B.W. of August 6th, Nicoll leaped into the fray and denounced the German menace. In this leader he announced what he thought was to be the Free Churches' only attitude and why he thought so.

> Till Sunday [war had been declared on a Tuesday] we were working hard for a policy of strict neutrality in the European war. We had hoped to publish to-day [Thursday] messages from the Free Church leaders advocating this policy. Surely it was natural to take this line. We of the Free Churches are bound under the most tremendous penalties to set the example of peace and good will. It has been clear for long that in one way or other by a general disarmament, or by natural destruction, the present military system of Europe must come to an end. The Free Churches have worked for disarmament, and who can blame them? Who can condemn those who have hoped against hope that this bloodshed, this devastation, this outbreak of deadly passions, these strong perils casting their shadows far into the future might have been averted from mankind? But after Sir Edward Grey's speech on Monday our hopes have vanished, as we think, and many of our friends are of the same mind. Others who are highly to be honoured are still of opinion that intervention could have been avoided. Only very grave reasons could justify the breaking of national unity when the nation is fighting for its life. But there may be reasons that not only justify, but compel, that course. To say "my country, right or wrong" is to renounce humanity and to defy God. Only one must be certain of his ground if he sets himself to weaken

and worry and discredit a Government that has been forced to arms in a deadly struggle.[1]

That Nicoll was set against a war is borne out by Lord Riddell's War Diary. The Diary states that on the previous Wednesday [July 29, 1914] Nicoll had intended to get the Free Churches to prepare a Memorial to the Government against intervention and against supporting Russia.[2] It also mentions that on Saturday, August 1st, Lloyd George had received a letter from W.R.N. stating that he and the Free Churches would strongly oppose any war.[3]

Nicoll said in his leader that it was the disclosures of Sir Edward Grey and the arguments that were based upon them that were so "sorrowfully convincing." "In the opinion of the Government the real cause of the war was the action of Germany."[4] With his change of mind there came to Nicoll a happier observation. It was that under the new threat all of the factions in the country had disappeared. Even in Ireland, on the brink of civil revolt, this was true. Mr. Redmond[5] had electrified the House by his pledge of Irish support from Catholics and Protestants alike. Now Nicoll was convinced that the natural enmities of parties had gone and would remain submerged until the end of the conflict. "Men who yesterday fancied themselves severed by an impassible gulf are to-day in each other's arms."[6] Still, Nicoll was not over-optimistic. He admitted that no one could predict the future. All were now fellow-sufferers who must face the

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1 B.W., August 6, 1914.
2 Lord Riddell's War Diary, p. 6.
3 Ibid, p. 11. When Lloyd George saw Nicoll's change of mind in his leader "United We Stand," L.G. said, "I told my secretary to keep the letter and the article with my most treasured papers, as I shall like to look at them in the future." Ibid.
4 B.W., August 6, 1914.
5 John E. Redmond, Chairman, Irish Parliamentary Party.
6 B.W., August 6, 1914.

grave duties and the sacrifices ahead of them.

> Yes, we must pray as we never prayed before. We will, for we must. Think of the prayers that will be offered for husbands, for sons, for brothers, for lovers. There is no prayer so intense as the prayer of Gethsemane: "If it be possible let this cup pass from me." And that prayer will be prayed night and day by anguished hearts. Let us pray also for peace, and pursue it even when the heart fails. The answer will come.[1]

Lloyd George said of Nicoll, "Once he decided in his mind that there was no alternative to the dread arbitrament of war - except the abandonment of liberty and the surrender of national honour - he never hesitated and he never wavered."[2] And Nicoll's biographer wrote, "To him as a Christian patriot nothing else seriously mattered. Now, as never before, he realized his calling and election. Surely he had come into the kingdom of journalism for such a time as this."[3] About W.R.N. and the war a fellow journalist stated,

> His support like that of every journalist, became more necessary during all the agony of the Great War. Robertson Nicoll was never in doubt as to where he himself should stand in that struggle; and his unquestioning acceptance of the righteousness of the War, had considerable effect on those battalions of Nonconformists, all of whose training was rather antagonistic to militarism or anything that looked like it.[4]

Sir William Robertson Nicoll had received his accolade on the recommendation of the Government which was still in power at the beginning of the war, and they were aware of his political influence and of his command over the Free Churchmen. He was the one man above all others who could persuade Nonconformists on an issue. The Government knew of Sir William's great influence in the Education Struggle's Passive Re-

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1 Ibid.
2 David Lloyd George, "Personal Tributes," B.W., May 10, 1923.
3 Darlow, op. cit., p. 236.
4 Daily Telegraph, May 5, 1923.

sistance movement which had such a widespread effect. They also must have been aware that if Nicoll had decided to have nothing to do with the war he would have exerted his power and influence to persuade the Nonconformists, whose background was heavily steeped in anti-militarism, to take the same view.[1] The number of Nonconformists in Great Britain could have made such a step a most serious, if not entirely fatal, move. Therefore they must also have reasoned that he was the one man whose word carried sufficient weight among this vast body, and to whom should be entrusted the task of assuring the Nonconformists that their urgent duty lay in unitedly backing the war effort. Whether this reasoning is valid or not, it seems to be confirmed in several facts, among the greatest of which was a request to Nicoll by the Publicity Department of the War Office to write a short paper giving reasons why young Nonconformists should enrol themselves.[2] This request Nicoll complied with in an article entitled "An Appeal to Young Nonconformists" which he wrote on August 30, 1914. It appeared in many of the daily papers published on Tuesday, September 1st, 1914. The following Thursday, September 3rd, it appeared as a leader, with a few minor revisions, under the title, "Set Down My Name, Sir." This was the same title with the same opening illustration which he had used for his leader of the B.W. in July 31st, 1902, when he had roused the Nonconformists to passive resistance against the Education Bill of that year. This time it was printed in pamphlet form and sold

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1 As Dr. Clifford had led the Nonconformists' campaign against the Boer War.

2 "Speaking of Robertson Nicoll, L.G. /Lloyd George/ said he was a great person and had been a good friend to him and a great help at the time of the war. Had it not been for Nicoll's attitude, the Free Churches might have taken a different line, and the whole course of the war might have been altered. Nicoll had enemies, due in a great measure to the fact that he was thorough. When he went into the war, he went into it heart and soul, as he /L.G./ himself had done." Lord Riddell's Intimate Diary of the Peace Conference, p. 406.

by Hodder and Stoughton for one half-penny. Its sale was immense.

Its influence even as a newspaper article was so great that its contents merit consideration.

> I call on all Nonconformists who can fight to set down their names in this hour of crisis, and to enlist without delay. That Nonconformists are neither cowardly nor incapable when called to a righteous war the glorious name of Oliver Cromwell sufficiently attests. That this is a most righteous and necessary war is a proposition which cannot be contested.[1]

To this statement Nicoll added seven short, concise reasons why he thought the war to be "most righteous and necessary." 1) It had been forced upon the country. "It was a war which was none of our seeking." 2) A treaty was involved. Faith must be kept with the smaller nations, especially loyal and brave Belgium. "We went into this war because it involved the keeping of the most solemn and sacred obligations." 3) The opponent ignored Christian law and instead had a code of conduct baser than that of savages. "We entered the war because, as increasingly appears, it was a war against barbarism of the most evil and remorseless kind - a war for freedom, civilisation, and Christianity." 4) Subjugation to the Germans would mean a life so intolerable that even death would be infinitely preferable. "We are now fighting for our very life as a nation." 5) This was a war on behalf of the common people. The success of Germany would be the end of democracy for many a weary year. "The very existence of democracy as it has flourished in this country is threatened with a death wound." 6) When peace is declared they should have a world bright with promise. "We are fighting for our children." 7) The result of this world-war may depend on a very slight preponderance of force on either

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1 The Globe, September 1, 1914. This same article appeared in the Evening News, the Daily Chronicle, and the Birmingham Daily Mail on September 1, 1914, and in the Star on September 3, 1914.

side. Every man who can fight is wanted, and wanted at once. Hitherto there had been no attempt to drive the people, because it was felt that they could be led, and that when the issues were set clearly before them they would "abhor as infinitely worse than death the stain of cowardice. For the Order of the White Feather there will soon be no room in our land."[1]

The B.W.'s leading article and the pamphlet, "Set Down My Name, Sir," included the entire newspaper article but in a much expanded form. It was a stirring recruiting call with several specific ideas accentuated, one being,

> Young athletes should be in the field, and there should be a public opinion strong enough to coerce them into their duty. From our own personal knowledge we could mention a large district of the country from which not a single recruit has come, or had come a few days ago. We need men to begin their training at once. If voluntary effort fails, then there must be conscription, but that we hope and believe is needless.[2]

The article and leader inspired many acclamations to be bestowed upon it. The editor of John Bull wrote an open letter to Sir William praising it. "You and I have never seen eye to eye upon the questions of the day," wrote "John Bull," "but in the hour of trial we are at one . . . . My purpose in writing is to thank you for your Appeal to Nonconformists to join the Army - which is one of the most sane and manly pronouncements issued since the war began."[3]

Nicoll's leader was the forerunner of many later leaders which he wrote in the interest of recruitment. His help on this issue was greatly needed. On November 12, 1914, he made a plea in a leader titled "More Men and Still More Men." The recruiting situation was getting

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1 These seven points are condensed from the newspaper article as printed in the Evening News, September 1, 1914.

2 B.W., September 3, 1914.

3 John Bull, September 12, 1914.

serious. Nicoll said that a million men were needed besides those already in the field and some estimates ran as high as a million and a half.

> The country will soon know the proposals of the Government for the recruiting of the Army. Writing in partial ignorance, we shall not attempt any criticism. We hope with all our hearts that our rulers will rise to the height of the situation. All of us abhor Conscription. All of us agree that it is foreign to the genius of our people. Every expedient short of Conscription must be tried ere we come to the conclusion that the men cannot be got voluntarily.[1]

It must not be forgotten that the B.W. although a religious journal, originally and foremost Nonconformist, by the very fact of its now enormous circulation, was being read by peoples of all faiths - and also by those who had none. Often there appeared in the paper's pages the notice: "To advertisers - 'The British Weekly' has by far the largest circulation of any religious newspaper published in this country - Church or Nonconformist."[2] This circulation was a proof of Nicoll's appeal and also that he "has become national property, and can no longer be labelled as the exclusive property of any denomination."[3] He never repressed his Nonconformity in the thought that he could be all things to all men. His readers followed him because he was always definite in the stand he took, and that stand almost always was from the Free Churches' viewpoint. All during the war he believed that his views coincided with Nonconformity's although there were many churchmen and journalists who denounced him for his position in justifying the war. But he clung tenaciously to his beliefs, certain in his own heart that they represented Nonconformists, if not those of Christians of all denominations. Many times it seemed as though he wrote leaders with the express purpose of explaining to the

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1 B.W., November 12, 1914.
2 B.W., October 22, 1914.
3 J. Stoddart, op. cit., p. 136.

world these Nonconformist views. During the war this was especially so.

One leader which shows this aspect of Nicoll's writing was called, "The Ten Commandments Will Not Budge." This was an answer to the speech which the Kaiser had made to some of his troops who were leaving for the front lines. "Remember that the German people are the chosen of God. On me as German Emperor the Spirit of God has descended. I am his weapon, His sword and his vicegerent. Woe to the disobedient, death to cowards and unbelievers."[1] Nicoll reminded his readers that Might does not make Right. He warned them of the fallacy of believing that German militarism is the gospel of only a few among the German people. No temporary peace would do. He was thankful that the majority of people realized that. Nonconformists did. He said that those who thought that Nonconformists would be ready to welcome a speedy and temporary peace little know the spirit of Free Churchmen. "There can be no end to it till the Allies are together in Berlin imposing upon a conquered people terms of peace . . . . In fighting the war lords of Germany we are fighting anti-Christ."[2] Nicoll recalled how it had been suggested in some quarters that Nonconformists would be ready to welcome a speedy and temporary peace; that to get out of the pressure and the misery of war they would sacrifice the future. Those who think so, he said, little know the spirit of Free Churchmen. The Free Churches he believed to be absolutely one in their determination to see the thing through. They, like all the people, have been deceived, and they must face the task. That task was to bring to an end the militarism of Germany. The German war lords, "stand having their loins girded about with arrogance, and having on the breastplate of arrogance, and

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1 Quoted in B.W., September 17, 1914.
2 B.W., September 17, 1914.

taking the shield of arrogance and the sword of arrogance, which is not the word of God."[1] That arrogance he thought must be crushed out with an iron heel.

Besides these leaders, a real service was rendered to the B.W. readers by the inauguration of a section called, "War Notes." Previously secular news had found its way into the paper under the headings "Notes of the Week," or "British Table Talk." But now the war claimed two or three columns which were filled with the very latest developments. These were printed in short, readable, interesting paragraphs. At the beginning of the war[2] these were unsigned, but from May 17, 1915,[3] until the armistice, these notes were signed "W.R.N." Through his friendship with Mr. Lloyd George and other politicians W.R.N. had access to uncensored facts and important information which seldom appeared in other papers. Thus he was aware of most that went on behind the scenes in those four years of war. "Readers of the British Weekly recognised that the war views expressed in its pages were more authentic and far ahead of many published in the daily papers."[4] One of the really great services which the "War Notes" accomplished was the sorting of fact from rumours. One such rumour began during the great retreat of August, 1914. The rumour claimed that hundreds of Russian soldiers had been landed in the north of Britain from Archangel and train load after train load of them were travelling south. All of Britain was filled with this story.[5] One historian writes, "How the rumour rose is unknown but it reached the German commanders and

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1 Ibid.
2 Actually they began in the September 3, 1914, issue.
3 Not the "end of the summer" as Darlow said, p. 247.
4 W.M. Parker, "A Great Scots Journalist," Scots Magazine, October, 1951, p. 59.
5 Lady Nicoll reported hearing it in Lumsden. Under the Bay Tree, p. 250.

genuinely alarmed them. Quite possibly the thought of Russians in their rear helped to secure the German retreat from the Marne."[1] W.R.N. in one of his first "War Notes" (September 3, 1914) told his readers of the falsity of this rumour.

As it has been pointed out Nicoll's leaders fell into several general classifications. That was true in religious and social questions and it proved true during the war. Besides writing on recruitment and the vindication of the war Nicoll wrote many tender and soothing leaders of consolation and encouragement. These were much needed as a palliative to the grim business of war. What could be called the first of these was itself called "Consolations." "The year will bring to all of us a succession of anxieties, and to many, grave losses and almost desolating bereavements. It is well, therefore, to ask whether there be any consolations in Christ."[2] The rest of the leader was sermonic in tone. But now and then there would be one of this type of leader whose appeal would be so widespread that requests would be received, by the B.W., for it to be printed in pamphlet form. Two or three times this happened during the war.

One occurrence was after the Allies had suffered severe losses and the wounded were pouring back from the front-line trenches. It was also the Easter season. Nicoll wrote his leader under the title, "When the Wounded Go Home" using the theme that death is dead for the faithful. Easter and its message, in those early days of the war, were precious as they had never been before.

> Never were there so many of our people bereaved or about to be bereaved. What anguished hearts need is the Easter assurance of life.

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1 Somervell, Modern Britain, p. 109.
2 B.W., January 14, 1915.

> For we cannot, try as we may, love the dead as dead. We may, and we do love their memories; but if we love themselves, then they are living. Love is for life; it cannot dwell with death.[1]

He realized that many readers would agree that his message was true of the faithful dead, but what is to be said of the great number fallen in battle who have not been faithful? To these, his answer was that courage was the root of all virtue, and that self-sacrifice was the divinest element in man, the element that brings him nearest to the Christ. But he admitted that many even among the brave had not lived wisely, had many weaknesses, and were often grievously at fault. Their redemption could not come from the fact that they died well, however well they died. Is there no hope then, for them, of a place in the great Redemption? "We may hope much, and very much, from the very peril and awfulness and solemnity of their end. Their lives were in hazard from the first day of fighting. Did they not know it? Did they not breathe a prayer to the Saviour?"[2] He was certain they did. And so he assured his readers that whoever turned his face to Christ believingly, though it be but for an instant before his death, finds eternal life. This was the gospel in its naked majesty. There was nothing to be added to it.

Besides these "consolation" leaders he wrote just as frequently about prayer. Altogether they formed a series with the same theme running through them. The first was called, "Prayer in Time of War." This was written shortly after the war began and set the tenor for the rest.

> In this day of trouble many are seeking God who hardly gave him a place in their thoughts while the sun shown on them. God is the solitary refuge to which the anguished heart can flee. To be driven to God by fear is more ignoble than to be drawn to him by love, but He makes no distinction. This, we say, is a time for prayer and

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1 B.W., April 1, 1915.
2 Ibid.

> supplication and intercession, and the more this spirit grows, the more intense our petitions are; the more frequent our assemblies, the happier is the prospect that this trial will leave the nation spiritually enriched.[1]

He claimed that from all quarters there was a sense of perplexity and discouragement in many assemblies of prayer. The reason for this was that the petitions offered were not clear enough, not definite enough, not passionate enough. So Nicoll stated briefly some of the main considerations on the nature of prayer, and their application to war time. In the first place, prayer must be the prayer of faith. The amount of faith, great or little, did not matter. To have some faith was the great essential. Then too, prayer must be in the name of Christ. "It is much that in this way we are less trammelled with the miserable consciousness of our own evil, with the sense of shortcomings and guilt."[2] The application of all this was, according to Nicoll, that it was the readers' business to pray for victory in the battlefield, in the struggle against Germany. "Each day comes fresh proof that we are at war with Anti-Christ.[3] The destruction of the Rheims Cathedral is a spot on Germany which can never be washed out whilst memory holds her seat. All the centuries to come cannot undo this deed."[4]

But he was specific in stating that the Free Churches wanted no forms of prayer. He thought that those prayers which were being published at that time were "so limp, so nerveless, so faithless, so cowardly"

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1 B.W. September 24, 1914.
2 Ibid.
3 Others held this view also. Dr. Archibald Fleming wrote Nicoll, ". . . every day shows more clearly that the combatants are Barbarianism and Civilization; Materialism and Idealism; the arm of the flesh and the gentleness that maketh great; anti-Christ and Christ." Letter written August 21, 1914. C.R. Nicoll, Under the Bay Tree, p. 248.
4 B.W., September 24, 1914.

that the mere reading of them depressed him. He told his readers to pray for the country's soldiers and sailors, and, as far as possible, to pray for them by name. He concluded by saying that the enemy should also be prayed for, remembering that the first cry of the "Immaculate Lamb from the altar was, 'Father, forgive them, for they know not what they do.'" Thus he began his article by saying that the enemy was the Anti-Christ and that their destruction should be prayed for, and he ends his same article instructing the reader to pray for the forgiveness of this Anti-Christ. But it struck a responsive chord in the people for requests began to flow in, asking for the article in printed form. This was done, it being printed in a tract size pamphlet which sold for a penny.

These two leaders have been examined with some thoroughness because they are samples of two of the basic types appearing throughout the war. It would not be fair to say that W.R.N. repeated himself. That is not true, but when one reads his leaders at one sitting the likeness of their message is striking. The B.W. readers, of course, read them as they were spread out over the war years. In October of 1916, sixteen of these leaders were gathered together and published in a volume called, Prayer in War Time. It is difficult to ascertain the influence that they had on Nicoll's public. Apart from the sale of the book,[1] a great number of "Letters to the Editor" testify to the real help and mental fortification which Nicoll's leaders gave to people in the time of their utmost need.

Nicoll had added his weight to the battle for voluntary recruitment, but as the war grew it became apparent that never would enough volunteer. Many people who were thoroughly patriotic, hated the idea of conscription,

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1 It never sold more than the first edition, which seems to be the least sale of all his books.

which they regarded as a surrender of British liberty. Nicoll and others however gradually began to realize that it was both fairer and more efficient than the voluntary system. It not only rounded up the "shirkers," but allowed skilled men who were more valuable in the workshops than at the front to be retained by the government. After conscription had started, many volunteers who were skilled men then at the front, were recalled and placed in the workshops. In December, 1915, conscription began with the bachelors only, but full conscription followed and was announced in the May 18, 1916, issue of the B.W.[1]

On June 1, 1916, Nicoll took it upon himself to raise money for four Y.M.C.A. huts. He wrote a leader concerning this.

> The buildings will be erected immediately behind the fighting front in France, and the total sum required will be about £1,250. We have received from the readers of the British Weekly many thousands of pounds for great and worthy causes. There never was a more pressing need than the need which we expound to-day.[2]

The National Council of the Y.M.C.A. had suggested that the money collected should be subscribed as a most fitting memorial to the Free Churchmen and other readers of the B.W. who had fallen in the war. Nicoll told his readers that the work of the Y.M.C.A. had been little less than miraculous. Also, the object of the Y.M.C.A. had been to take hold of the whole life of the men, but especially the Christian life. "They are led away from temptation . . . . The workers in the Y.M.C.A. tents are leading multitudes of our fighting men to the Lord Jesus Christ . . . ."[3] The same issue of the B.W. contained a full page advertisement with a diagram of "the front" in France showing four crosses where the four buildings

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1 For a commentary on the Government's view of this see Lord Riddell's War Diary, p. 169.
2 B.W., June 1, 1916.
3 Ibid.

would be located. Attached was a coupon which could be torn out and included with a donation. By the following week £843 had been donated. At the end of a fortnight the fund contained £1627. The next week (June 22, 1916) Nicoll stated the amount had risen to £2,085, and he wrote a word of thanks. "As the need is great, we now ask our readers to increase their contributions to £2,500 - just double the sum we originally asked for. This will build eight huts."[1] By the following week this sum had been subscribed - within four weeks of Nicoll's first plea. When over £2,811 had been donated the B.W. asked for two more huts. The fund kept growing. By August 10th there had accumulated £3,807 and by October 5th Nicoll found it so close to £5,000 that he asked his readers to make that goal, which they did by November 23rd, 1916. The Newspaper World, commented, "I do not think there is a similar instance of a religious weekly obtaining £5,000 through its advocacy as established by Sir W. Robertson Nicoll in The British Weekly . . . . The cause and the effort were alike good."[2]

Robertson Nicoll's political activities increased rather than decreased during the war. The papers had been, for some time, suggesting that one man be put in charge of the Air Policy. He rather startled his readers, and others, by a leader he wrote on February 10, 1916. It was called, "Work for Lord Northcliffe." He proposed that Northcliffe be appointed Minister of Air Defence. He advocated that the Government should disarm their chief critic and let him show them what he could do. Nicoll received many letters of approval from his readers, but the rest of the country seemed against him.[3] Lloyd George thought very little of

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1 B.W., June 22, 1916.
2 Newspaper World, December 2, 1916.
3 A humorous cartoon ridiculing Nicoll's suggestion appeared in the Glasgow Weekly Herald and was frequently reprinted. A reproduction of it is printed in Lady Nicoll's book Under the Bay Tree, facing p. 264.

the suggestion also. He remarked,

> He is best where he is. Alone he might organise the air defence very well; but many others could do that. You must secure an organiser who can organise successfully under our form of Government. A Minister cannot threaten resignation every day, and, unless he is strong and well supported, no threat would have much effect.[1]

In the realm of politics Nicoll was seldom on very solid footing, but he seemed to enjoy having a hand in the shaping of history. On February 24, 1916, he published a leader, "Lord Fisher," written by Mr. James Douglas, which advocated Lord Fisher's[2] return to the charge of the Admiralty. Lloyd George had advocated this in private a few days before the leader had been written,[3] although he did not know just where to place him, as he thought he would be of little use serving again on the War Council. Nicoll felt otherwise. He happened to be with Lord Fisher at tea with the Duchess of Hamilton when a message arrived inviting Lord Fisher to attend the War Council on the following Tuesday. Fisher said he would not go. Nicoll tells the rest of the story himself.

> I got up and said, "Admiral, it is your duty to go." The Duchess said, "This is what I have told him." Fisher then said, "Very well, I will go!" This was a dramatic moment - one of the most dramatic in my life. Here was I, an elderly journalist, a person of no particular importance, giving advice which might affect the destinies of the British Empire. Fisher said that he was in communication with Lord Loreburn[4] and that nineteen other peers were prepared to act with Loreburn should the Cabinet not be willing to take his, (Fisher's) advice. Fisher's proposal was to state his case in the House of Lords and to ensure the support of the group of peers above mentioned. When I left, Fisher came to see me into the lift and I said, "You must send Loreburn all the documents. Promise me that you will." He demurred a little and then said, "By God, I will send them!"[5]

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1 Lord Riddell's War Diary, pp. 153 f.
2 Lord Fisher, First Sea Lord 1904-10; 1914-15.
3 Lord Riddell's War Diary, p. 154.
4 Lord Chancellor, 1905-12.
5 Quoted from a conversation recorded in Lord Riddell's War Diary, p. 160.

Nicoll pursued this idea for a short time[1] but he soon regained his perspective. Fisher had written some incendiary letters to Jellicoe[2] and the Emperor of Russia. Fisher sent copies to Nicoll, who immediately returned them without making copies, as he was afraid to keep copies of the letters in the house. "Nicoll now thinks that Fisher is in a dangerous state of mind and that his return to the Admiralty would be perilous."[3]

These excursions into the deeper side of politics, whether they were rash or not, served Nicoll and, in turn, his B.W., in a very beneficial way. They gave his pronouncements and his writings on the war a certain first-hand authenticity which his readers felt and respected. Many examples of this insight could be cited e.g. his "War Notes," but one or two instances will suffice. Rumania was defeated near the end of November, 1916. The military outlook grew black and ominous. It was on Thursday, December 7, of that week that Nicoll wrote a leader "The Crisis." It was evident that the author wrote with authority even though he disclaimed it. "We have come to the most serious crisis in Parliamentary history. What we are going to write claims no authority, but we believe that it will be found accurate as a record of fact."[4] It was. The leader was short, but very favourable to Lloyd George and his record. It proclaimed the country's need of him and predicted a new government. On the following Wednesday it was announced by the Press Bureau that Mr. Lloyd George had been requested by the King to form a Government. /Mr. Asquith had resigned/ He consented to undertake the task. Many times afterwards

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1 For further evidence see C.R. Nicoll, Under the Bay Tree, p. 265 and Lord Riddell's War Diary, p. 173.
2 Earl Jellicoe, in command of Grand Fleet 1914-16.
3 Lord Riddell's War Diary, p. 185.
4 B.W., December 7, 1916.

Nicoll seemed mysteriously able to forewarn his readers of Lloyd George's strategy. Time and time again he championed Lloyd George and his efforts in the columns of the B.W..

Often other rather cryptic notes appeared informing readers that the editor knew some very important information which could not then be told. "Good News from America. One very gratifying piece of news relating to America is not for publication, though it is widely known and has given the greatest satisfaction in both the Allied Countries."[1] And then again, "The Secret Session. We are also forbidden to publish any account of the Secret Session last week. But it is known that the Prime Minister's speech was marvellously effective and hopeful and for a moment it swept all opposition away."[2] It is true that the B.W. readers were favoured with much first-hand information, and Nonconformists looked to the paper for guidance and advice. "In war-time his /W.R.N.'s/ was the voice - almost the command - that steadied the wavering ranks of Nonconformity solidly behind Lloyd George and the prosecution and the winning of the war."[3]

In April, 1917, Nicoll began another series of leaders. This series had as its theme what its name implied, "Reunion in Eternity." Rare was the family which had not by this time been touched by bereavement. And many were the stricken hearts assuaged by these messages. In November, 1918, these leaders were collected, and, with additons, they were published as a volume under the same general title, Reunion in Eternity.

It is interesting to note how during the war years of 1914-1918 the spirit of the B.W. leaders rose and fell with the rise and fall of the war. This was to be expected, but when seen as a composite its real

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1 B.W., "War Notes," January 24, 1918.
2 Ibid.
3 Doran, Barrabas, p. 71.

feeling can be better understood. When the war was first begun Nicoll's challenge was clear. He was certain that it was Right over Might and he urged the nation to stand united. His early appeal was to avoid conscription by voluntary enlistment, but soon he saw that conscription offered the only solution. In the early months of 1915 the terrible losses in France urged him to write "When the Wounded Go Home." Then came the Russian reverses which seemed likely to set a million of the very best German troops free to act on the offensive in the West. Nicoll's leader, "The Next Three Months" (June 10, 1915) pointed out this situation, and said in effect that the country must gird its loins for a real struggle. A month later the B.W.'s leader was entitled, "Better" and the readers were assured that "Things are looking better . . . . Military operations have on the whole been satisfactory . . . Russian resistance has not crumbled . . . The French Army is magnificent . . . Party politics are dead . . ."[1] When the long series of assaults on Verdun started in February of 1916 and W.R.N. wrote an ominous leader called, "Hold On!" (March 23, 1916). Later that year in July began the Battle of the Somme which lasted many weeks, and involved enormous losses among the British troops. Because of these losses Nicoll wrote a tender and sympathetic leader, "The Casualty Lists."

> Day by day we keep looking with dim eyes at the bleeding list of casualties. It seems that if anything could put faith to confusion, if anything could cancel prayer, if anything could quench hope, it would be this welter of war and wounds and death. How can we rise out of our darkness and look behind us and before us with quiet and assured hearts? . . . . There is a supplication appropriate for the need, in what has been called the Prayer of Moses, the Man of God, in the 90th Psalm. That psalm has truly been called the dirge which rises into hope. "Let the beauty of the Lord our God be upon us; and establish Thou the work of our hands upon us; yea, the work of our hands establish Thou it."[2]

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1 B.W., July 15, 1915.
2 B.W., September 14, 1916.

In the last week of January (25th), 1917, the B.W. leading article concerned "The War After Thirty Months" and reviewed what had transpired during that time. It was a sane survey, rather resigned in its outlook, but it was neither optimistic nor pessimistic. It stated simply that Germany was not vanquished, regardless of what officials or even papers of high standing had said; there was still a job ahead, and each one must resolve to see it through to the finish. A fortnight later the B.W.'s spirits soared in a happy leader called, "Hail Columbia." Its rejoicing was over the fact that, "In the House of Representatives on Saturday President Wilson announced that diplomatic relations were broken off between the United States and Germany."[1] President Wilson had acted in this manner because Germany had recommenced their "unrestricted" submarine warfare after repeated warnings from the United States. Nicoll saw this as an omen of a closer relationship between the English speaking nations of the world and eventually, possibly, even aid to the Allies from this sister nation. Hope had been renewed in the tone of the leaders.

But this hope was shortlived. Time gave a new light to the harshness of the situation. The anniversary of the war's beginning found Nicoll saying in his leader, "Three Years - and After," "Three years have been spent under the shadow of the sword, and the battle rages as fiercely as ever with no visible signs of ending. We may pause to glance back at the past and forward to the future."[2] He did believe though, that the war was promoting the unity of nations.

> Between Britain and France there is now a romantic friendship. The American Commonwealth has girded on its armour, and in the spirit

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1 B.W., February 8, 1917. The U.S. declared war on Germany in April, 1917.

2 B.W., August 9, 1917.

> of a Knight of the Round Table has clasped hands with us and is preparing to ratify the new compact by the ancient ritual of the covenant of sacrifice.[1]

He had a deep and humble, but well-grounded conviction that God had been with the country in the war, and that He had stretched out his saving hand more than once. "We have the fullest belief in the ultimate triumph of reason and humanity, but our confidence is first of all built upon God."[2]

Spirits rose once more in the 1917 Christmas Number. General Allenby had taken Jerusalem. Nicoll's joyful leader, "Jerusalem Delivered" pointed out that the Chief Rabbi, Dr. Hertz, claimed that it was a remarkable coincidence that Jerusalem was delivered on the anniversary of the Maccabean festival. "On that day (December 11th), 2,000 years ago, the Maccabeans freed the Holy City from the heathen oppressor, and thereby changed the spiritual future of humanity.[3]

The year 1918 saw the gradual arrival in France of the troops which were being raised and trained in America. But Russia had made peace with Germany. For the first time since 1914 Germany had a superiority of numbers on the western front. She now realized that there was a chance for victory and a limited time with in which to secure it. On March 21st the Germans began the Second Battle of the Somme. On the 23rd, which became known as "Black Saturday," the Germans broke through the British lines and defeated the Third and Fifth Armies. Paris and the Channel Ports were once more in grave danger as they had been in 1914. Two days before Easter Nicoll's sombre leader was called, "A Time for

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1 Ibid.
2 Ibid.
3 B.W., December 13, 1917.

Faith."

> The war has clutched the heart of the nation as it never has done before. There may have been more critical hours in its history than the hour we are living and dying through, but we now know far more clearly than in the first confused and disturbed months of the contest what is going on and how we stand. The boldest holds his breath. We realise perhaps for the first time that the issue may be defeat. We are convinced that it will not, but there are possibilities that can hardly be estimated.[1]

It was a time for faith, he stated, faith in the country's soldiers, faith in the country's leaders, but above all it was a time for faith in God our Father.

From April onwards American troops not only poured into France[2] but took an active part in the fighting. On August 8th the British attacked in front of Amiens.[3] Success followed success. The spirits of the readers of the B.W. soared with those of its editor when he wrote on August 15th a cheerful leader, the mood of which was summed up in its title, "A Week of Victory." This time there was a difference. The temper of the front page of this particular religious journal remained lighthearted during the rest of the war. "Is it Peace?" written October 17th exemplifies this.

> The oftener we read President Wilson's last reply to the Germans the more we like it. It is stern. Not as stern as future utterances of Dr. Wilson will and must be, but very stern nevertheless . . . . It is so far cheering to observe that there is an almost perfect unanimity among all the Allies as to its intrinsic significance and worth.[4]

An armistice was signed November 11, 1918. Nicoll considered "Satan" to have fallen. The title of his leader of November 14th put it into words; "Beholding the Fallen Satan."

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1 B.W., March 28, 1918.

2 As one historian says, ". . . one American every five seconds, day and night" or "about 2,000,000 . . . had arrived by Armistice day." Somervell, Modern Britain, p. 126.

3 "This British attack, with 450 tanks, came as a complete surprise, and Ludendorff in his Memoirs afterwards declared that August 8, 1918, was the black day of the war." Ibid, p. 127.

4 B.W., October 17, 1918.

> Again the week has been crowded with incredible events. The fighting is over. The Kaiser has abdicated. There is an end of the mighty evil system which Germany built up with blood and tears. Arrogance has again been evidently rebuked and confounded by the Most High. The chief minister of the evil, the worst criminal, has been humiliated to the very dust. Everywhere there are dethronements. Society through confusions has framed a new order. It is better to think of these things than to write about them. It is best to say, "This is the Lord's doing, and it is wondrous in our eyes."[1]

Thus a great episode in the life of Robertson Nicoll and his religious journal, the B.W., ended. But Nicoll lived until 1923 writing the leaders and for the most part directing the paper's policy almost to the very end of his days. Inasmuch as the Peace Treaties were the direct outgrowth of the war and that Nicoll had much to say in his paper about them, and no little influence in the realm of politics, a word must be said about his attitude towards the enemy in the final settlement. To keep the perspective, a few facts must be borne in mind. The victory was unexpected and swift. To revert from a grim attitude of war to the serenity which the establishment of peace relations demand requires more than natures of human quality. England and France were human. It was a long time before the countries could think sanely and generously. Unfortunately the peace necessarily had to be made within the first six months. Moreover, an election was three years overdue in Britain. The electorate were eager for vengeance upon Germany. "Make Germany pay for the whole cost of the war" and "Hang the Kaiser" were among the more popular slogans. The basis of previous elections, the party system, had practically disappeared. Lloyd George, the leader of half of the Liberal party, was the Prime Minister of a National Government comprised of all the leading Conservatives. This government sought a continuance of their power.

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1 B.W., November 14, 1918.

They became pledged to make Germany pay for the War and were elected by an overwhelming majority. "And so at the General Election of December, 1918, Asquith's followers, who would have stood for moderation in peacemaking, were deliberately proscribed by Lloyd George and annihilated at the polls."[1] History seems to indicate that had Germany been treated with more moderation and been allowed representation in the peace conference, a more lasting peace would probably have ensued.[2] To what extent Nicoll shared responsibility for this attitude is not easily estimated, but by 1918 the B.W. had an enormous following; Nicoll had become a real guide and influence not only among Nonconformists but among many others as well; and Nicoll's influence upon Lloyd George has been well ascertained.[3] Even Trevelyan says, " . . . the Armistice found him [Lloyd George] in political alliance with the proprietors of certain popular journals, then fiercely calling out for vengeance on German war crimes."[4] For some strange reason Nicoll, even before the armistice, had been calling for vengeance upon the German people. A clear example of this is found in Nicoll's leader of February 21, 1918. In it he talks about moral indignation as the duty of all real Christians.

> To say "Let us forgive and forget" may be due to the mere disinclination to be troubled; it may come from the shallows, as well as from the depths, of human nature; and there is a special danger, towards the end of the war, that Christians, in all good faith, may lend themselves to a propaganda which subtly violates the principles of their religion . . . . It is an old danger, this risk of sentimental pity for criminals who are about to be punished for their mis-

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1 Trevelyan, British History in the Making, p. 483.

2 See, Ibid, pp. 482 ff., and Somervell, Modern Britain, pp. 130 ff.

3 The best evidence of this is found in the diaries of Rt. Hon. Lord Riddell, More Pages from My Diary, 1908-1914, War Diary, and Peace Conference.

4 Trevelyan, op. cit., p. 483.

deeds, and the Church should be on her guard against it. After making all possible deductions and allowances, and with every desire to acquit the Germans and the Turks of crimes committed by a few scoundrels in high places; a damning record remains which it would be unkind, even to the better conscience of Germany itself to ignore. People may argue, "Leave that to certain sections of the secular Press; there are plenty of writers and speakers to enforce the severe side, and few enough to raise a plea for generosity." But this is sophistry. The Christian conscience has no right to agree to a division of moral virtues; and besides, mercy without justice is as corrupting as mere justice without mercy. We who are supremely concerned about a Christian settlement that shall leave no rancour behind - or, at least, no ill-feeling that can possibly be avoided - ought to be reminding ourselves that we dare not expect to forgive Germany until we see that our forgiveness carries in its heart an intense condemnation of her crimes. It would be the worst possible service to the world if we acted so as to convey the idea that outrages, provided that they were committed some time ago, and on some plausible pretext, could be treated as if they had never been. That would be to set a premium upon crime among the stronger nations, and it would be a travesty of Christianity. It may be difficult to purge moral indignation from the smoke of hate and vindictiveness and the resentment of private wrongs, but it ought not to be too difficult for the instructed conscience of the Church, and one of most delicate and pressing duties is just to see that this flame of the spirit is not being quenched by Christian sentimentalism or coloured by national angers. The ethics of moral indignation are a perilous tract of discussion. Even when we recognise that it is a duty, we need to search our motives scrupulously, in order to eschew anything like injustice, exaggeration, and spite. But a duty it is, upon occasion.[1]

That occasion had arrived in the post-war period. As months rolled on he grew more vehement. Had he lived longer, or been younger, his views might have changed. But the comfort, encouragment, stability and real guidance that he gave during the crucial war years must not be overlooked.

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1 B.W., February 21, 1918.

CHAPTER IX

William Robertson Nicoll, the Preacher, in the Pulpit and the Press

William Robertson Nicoll was a journalist and a politician, but above all he was a minister of the Free Church. His religion must be reckoned as the predominant influence in his education, and in the formation of his character. He counted it a great honour to be sprung from a family in which piety, as well as nonconformity, was hereditary. His religion never lost the passionate evangelical quality given it by a godly father. But with a truly Celtic intuition he sensed the movements of thought in theology and sociology long before the church as a whole was aware of them. As a vigorous champion of the Free Churches he had no peer. Lloyd George, also a Free Churchman, recognized this and said of Nicoll,

> He was a jealous guardian of the rights, the traditions and the fame of the Free Churches. An attack upon them roused a fierce anger in his breast; he blazed with wrath, and a withering fire issued from his pen. For the faint-hearted in their cause he had no use, and for the men who deserted Nonconformity for reasons of social advancement he had a real scorn. The Free Churches have not had in my time a more skilful swordsman or one who possessed a stouter heart. In spite of his frail physique, he was a first-rate fighting man. It is a miracle that so much vitality should have flowed steadily for over a generation from so feeble a body. In every struggle Nonconformity has been engaged in during that period the vitalising gift of his personality has been a source of power and inspiration.[1]

Nicoll never hesitated to express himself upon views in which he took an interest, and in his Nonconformity he had a great interest. In fact one of the first things he ever wrote for publication before he became an editor, was a pamphlet in defence of the Free Church. This pamphlet he wrote during the Patronage Controversy in the Church of Scotland

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1 D. Lloyd George, "Personal Tributes," B.W., May 10, 1923.

and called it, "Reasons for Belonging to the Free Church." When he became an editor, with a greater scope for expression and a wider audience, he continued to expound this theme. Before the B.W. was a year old he had expressed himself on it in two leaders. The first, "About Going over to the Church,"[1] was his reiteration of the ideas he had published in his first pamphlet. He restated his reasons for being a Nonconformist, and for the rest of his editorial days his views never changed, although his methods of stating those views to his readers took many forms. An example was his second leader on the subject which he called "Our Case Against the High Church Party," - the same issue from a new angle.[2]

The following year he brought up the subject again. He began a leader by saying that before he wrote on the Duty of Nonconformists to the Church of England, he thought it desirable to consider the question, "What, according to its accredited teachers, is the duty of the Church of England towards Nonconformists?"[3] He went on to say that he had always been fair and generous in his treatment of the Church of England and he had no intentions of deviating from that spirit. A book had been published by the Society for Promoting Christian Knowledge, entitled The Parish Priest of the Town. This book was a series of lectures delivered in the Divinity School, Cambridge, by John Gott, D.D., Dean of Worcester, and the previous Vicar of Leeds. Dr. Gott's lectures were published by the Tract Committee, a great Church Society, and inasmuch as none of the Church papers had said a word against them Nicoll took the Dean's pronouncements as representative. The editor of the B.W. believed it was his duty

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1 B.W., March 4, 1887.
2 B.W., September 16, 1887.
3 B.W., June 29, 1888.

to enlighten all of his readers as to these representative views of what the Church's attitude was toward Dissent. Dr. Gott believed that Dissent was a force to contend with. He said that schism was carnal, and that the Dissenter represented schism. As to its political aspects the Dean held that the political Dissenter was an enemy of God and the country. Nicoll commented on this. "Political Dissenters are universally understood to be the men among Nonconformists - such as Dr. R. W. Dale - who have given themselves to the noble and weary task of bringing the law of the nation into harmony with what they conceive to be the will of Christ."[1] In answer to the question of what should be the attitude of the Church to this Dissent the Dean said that it was a thing to be destroyed, that it was not to be conciliated.

Nicoll's evaluation of these teachings throws much light on his views of the Church and Nonconformity. "The issue of this great conflict involves so deeply the fortunes of the Kingdom of God in this realm, the interests concerned are so much greater than those of any individual, that recrimination, sarcasm, and such things are unspeakably irrelevant."[2] He believed there was no need to answer the charges such as the one the Dean made that political Dissenters were enemies of God. The past could speak for itself. Instead, Nicoll simply stated his beliefs concerning the issue. He believed that it was good to remember that Nonconformity, unless it was a spiritual force, was nothing, and that it existed as a spiritual force simply as it witnessed an absolute submission to the authority of the unseen but present Lord, and an unchanging confidence in the all-sufficiency of His grace. "There is not an argument for Erastianism

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1 B.W., June 29, 1888.
2 B.W., July 13, 1888.

which is not paralysed by the truth of the living relation of the Divine Lord to His Church."[1] He went on to say that bearing witness to the authority and grace of the Redeemer, the Nonconformist should be confessed by Him before His Father and before men. But the Nonconformists need not hesitate for a moment to admit that, if their dependence on supernatural grace was a delusion, they must perish. If the conflict was simply between forces of this world, its issue was not in doubt. If they kept in living touch with Him from whom their help came, if they bore unshaken witness to the spiritual truths of His kingdom, if they remained faithful through the troubled to-day and to-morrow of the near future, they would, according to Nicoll, share in the not distant future which, he felt, surely belongs to Christ. His conclusion was, that, "the first duty of Nonconformists to the Church of England is to maintain inviolate their testimony to the spirituality and freedom of the Church of Christ. It is to seek the help of the Divine Spirit in the maintenance of this testimony."[2]

Nicoll continuously strove to maintain that testimony. In 1892, at the Grindelwald Conference, the Rev. Hugh Price Hughes was reported to have said that he was willing to be absorbed in the Church of England immediately if it was for the glory of God. He said that he entirely agreed with Père Hyacinthe that the Episcopacy was a sine qua non of reunion. He maintained that he had no difficulty in accepting it himself, and he believed that his Nonconformist brethren would have to make that concession. "They cannot expect an ancient Episcopal body to make all the concessions. It seems to me that the Lambeth proposals are most gen-

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1 Ibid.
2 Ibid.

erous, most liberal, most Christian, and have never received sufficient recognition from Nonconformists."[1] An immediate answer to Mr. Hughes was given in the leader of the B.W. the following week.

> Some things said at Grindelwald have been so wild, so mischievous, so extravagantly wide of practical needs, duties, and opportunities, that no time should be lost in making a firm protest. Mr. Hughes is reported to have said that Nonconformists are prepared to adopt the Episcopate. Further, that they are to concede the primacy of the Church of England as the most learned and influential of all the Churches, and we do not know what besides . . . . The Church of England is neither the most learned nor the most influential of Churches, though it is new to us to hear that either influences or learning give a Church primacy. If Mr. Hughes follows out his own argument, he must make overtures to the Church of Rome. There is just as much, and as little, hope of a reunion between the Church of England as it exists at present and Nonconformists as there is of a reunion between Nonconformists and the Church of Rome.[2]

Commenting on this "Reunion Controversy" the Manchester Guardian said, "The British Weekly, almost alone among the English Nonconformist organs, clearly recognises the true position which Dissenters should take, and on this matter at least speaks the feeling of Nonconformist Wales."[3]

Twenty years later (1918) this same controversy was renewed, but this time the instigator was the Secretary of the Baptist Union, the Rev. J. H. Shakespeare. He had written a book, The Church at the Cross Roads. The book created a great deal of discussion which Nicoll eagerly joined. In a leader he said that he shared the passion exhibited by the author for Christian unity. The greater portion of the volume had been a presentation of the author's plea for Free Church Federation. This failed to gain general acceptance, both the Wesleyan Conference and the English Presbyterian Synod, for instance, deciding in friendly terms, to shelve the question. But the main controversy concerned the book's concluding chapters wherein were discussed the possible reunion with the

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1 Quoted in the B.W., September 22, 1892.
2 B.W., September 29, 1892.
3 Manchester Guardian, October 4, 1892.

Church of England. Mr. Shakespeare implied unmistakably that Free Church ministers would have to submit to episcopal reordination. This statement incensed Nicoll who said that Mr. Shakespeare did not pretend to think that Episcopacy was essential to a true church, but he wanted reunion with the Anglicans on their own conditions because they absolutely refused to accept the Nonconformists on any other terms. Reunion could not hope to be achieved in any other way, but it seemed that Mr. Shakespeare thought it worth the price. However, Nicoll felt that the very existence of Free Churchmen as such demanded of them a respect for some things on a much higher plane than the Church's visible unity. He believed that even plain men could see hypocrisy in a Free Church minister, who regarded the reordination as harmless, submitting to reordination by a bishop, while the bishop held that it was a solemn and vital necessity. Moreover, Nonconformists had inherited the great tradition of spiritual freedom.

> We cannot forget the history of the "historic episcopate" . . . . To us, again, it seems like blasphemy for the secular arm to domineer in things sacred. Yet the Anglican Church is still by law established, its bishops are the Premier's nominees, its priests are compelled to use the baptismal office and to recite the Athanasian Creed - though Mr. Shakespeare does not stop to mention such trifles. The confessors and martyrs of Christian liberty purchased our freedom for us: we do not propose to spit upon their graves.[1]

Nicoll likened this thought of reordination to the suggestion made to the father of a family that he should be remarried to his wife. Such a father would take the suggestion as the intimation that he had never been married properly and that he had been living in a state of concubinage and that his children were illegitimate. There was no escape from this dilemma. It was true that Mr. Shakespeare protested that every sug-

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1 *B.W.*, December 5, 1918.

gestion the Free Church ministers had which cast any doubt or suspicion upon their own ordination to the ministry must be expressly excluded. But Nicoll told his readers that it was impossible to exclude it; the whole controversy hinged upon nothing else. Anglo-Catholics steadfastly denied any orders to be valid which were not conferred by a bishop who stood in the unbroken apostolic succession.

> For Free Church ministers to accept episcopal ordination would be to admit solemnly and publicly that they were receiving some spiritual gift which they did not possess before. It is time to speak plainly about this business in which Mr. Shakespeare is one of the protagonists. It has gone quite far enough, while people were too preoccupied by the war to pay attention to private conclaves of ecclesiastics at Oxford.[1]

The following issues of the B.W. contained a storm of letters from B.W. readers discussing the pros and cons of the controversy started by Nicoll's leader on Mr. Shakespeare's book. Some of the letters came from as far as France, thanking Nicoll for his leading article. One letter which took up a whole column was headed, "The Prime Minister's Appeal to Free Churchmen," and was signed, "D. Lloyd George."[2]

Thus by such expositions Nicoll expressed his thoughts to his reading public. In his more intimate personal life Nicoll was just as ardent a Free Churchman. All of his life, except when he was in the active ministry, he was a member of the United Free Church of Lumsden. The Rev. T. Laing, senior minister of the Lumsden church, said of Nicoll, "His relations with this congregation were of the most intimate and friendly kind. It says much for his regard for it, that he retained his position as elder amongst us, and sought no such honour or connection in any other church."[3] But his belief in the church had a broad base. He desired

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1 B.W., December 5, 1918.
2 B.W., "Christmas Number," December 12, 1918.
3 Aberdeen Journal, May 14, 1923.

unity - Christian unity. He disliked charges and counter-charges. His views on the Church may be summed up in his own words.

> The internal strife in the Church increases. Not only is there the battle that must be with us till it is decided; but Churchmen fight Churchmen; Nonconformists with Nonconformists. The wisdom and beauty of tolerance are recognised less and less, and while the awful shadow lies on all the churches, their energies are mostly consumed in waging civil war. Yet the Church of Christ is one, and will yet be aware of its unity. Meanwhile we come to wrong conclusions about each other; we utterly misconstrue and lose one another.[1]

Another belief which Nicoll held strongly was on the subject of the relation of the children to the Church. He insisted that the key to the obvious falling away from Church attendance was the neglect of the custom of bringing children to Church. In 1911 and 1912 Nicoll wrote many leaders concerning the relationship between the worship service and the Church. In 1913 he collected three of these leaders and published them in a small paper booklet which he called "For the Church." A few months later these same leaders and four others were bound in a larger booklet with an article, "The Young Worshipper's League" by the Rev. J. Williams Butcher. This time the group of articles were called The Children for the Church with the subtitle, "The Young Worshipper's League." Complete instructions and rules for carrying on a League of Young Worshippers were included, with twelve pages of testimonial letters by people who testified to the worth of such a League. The League idea, as promoted through the leaders of the B.W., was based on the proposition that it was chiefly by Christlike care for the children that languishing churches were invigorated, and spiritual indifference and decay were most surely arrested. He admitted the importance of Sunday-school teachers. "But Sunday-school teachers can-

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1 W.R. Nicoll, The Seen and the Unseen, (London: Hodder and Stoughton, [n.d.]), p. 126.

not crown their service unless they openly, deliberately, and proudly make it their chief end to bring their scholars into the Church of Christ as living and active members of the divine society."[1] The beginning must be with the children of the Church. The habit must be formed. The Christian Church was the sanctuary of collective worship, of common prayer. It was the sense of being one of a multitude of beings, of being in a group, with the same hopes and needs that gave strength and ardour and courage to Christian faith. "It is the thoughts of childhood that are the long, long thoughts, and it is in the sanctuary, and only in the sanctuary, that they can fully learn the message of the Eternal Love."[2]

During the writing of these leaders Nicoll received many letters. Some of them gave him the basis for other leaders. One such correspondent had written him, suggesting that nothing could be done until the practice of family worship had been revived. Nicoll incorporated his answer in a leader saying that he favoured the revival of family worship as much as anyone, but what was going to happen in the meantime? During the years that it would take to make the practice general what would become of the children? Were they to be left alone while their churchgoing parents were being urged to worship at the family altar? A beginning must be made. Nobody denied that the children might be gathered. Something could be done and no time should be lost. What should be done? No improvement in Sunday-school teaching would do the work or meet the need. Nicoll suggested that there be a direct connection between the Sunday-school and the Church. Let the children be guided to the Church,

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1 B.W., January 5, 1911. This leader is called, "A New Year's Motto" in the B.W. and in the booklet it is named, "For the Church."
2 B.W., April 27, 1911.

and when once there, let their presence be remembered. Let them know that they were cared for. The service should be adapted to their understanding and needs so far as possible.

> It ought to be regarded as a monstrous omission that a minister has no children's portion. He may preach a separate sermon, or he may embody what he has to say in his regular sermon; but he should so preach that every child in his church should feel that the children are thought of. There ought to be in every service a child's hymn. The children should have it pressed on them, from the first that they are expected and wanted in the church.[1]

This was not to be done by children's churches, to which Nicoll was strongly opposed. These he felt did not induce the habit of worship. They broke up the existing congregation, and they separated the children from their parents and the children and their minister. But if he disliked children's churches, there was one thing he thought was worse, and that he called "horrible and desperate." It was for the children to be taken into church to listen to their own sermon and then marched out when the regular preaching began.

> We have too much reason to fear that there are churches and chapels where this dreadful and ignominious surrender is practised. We think a true minister in the pulpit would, at all costs, prevent this. He would cry out, "Come back! Come, ye children, hearken unto me, and I will teach you the fear of the Lord." Over and over we have found that the sermons that most impress a child are often not the sermons to children but the sermons addressed to the congregation.[2]

Children, Nicoll felt, were much wiser than one thought, much more easily stirred, much more ready to take fire, much more appreciative of the truest eloquence of the heart.

Nicoll felt satisfied that he was meeting a need in writing these articles in his religious journal. The many requests he received to have the articles in a more convenient form led to their publication. In his

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1 B.W., May 4, 1911.
2 B.W., January 16, 1913.

leader, "Children in the Temple" he said, "We have abundant evidence from all parts of the world that out articles on a League of Worshipping Children have moved many hearts, and there is reason to believe that in not a few cases they have led to effective action."[1]

Nicoll's attitude toward the Church and toward children and the Church has been examined, but the first great question on which he had to guide the public mind was that of Biblical criticism. As a theological student Nicoll had studied under Robertson Smith[2] and was thoroughly acquainted with that teacher's mode of proving that the results of a fair and honest criticism can be reconciled with the position assigned to the Bible in the standards of the Church as the only rule of faith and manners. He was well versed in the developments in theology. He did as much as any man to bring the newer knowledge within reach of the poorest minister. He was not opposed to sound and wholesome criticism, whether lower or higher. He encouraged theologians of all denominations to print the results of their researches in the Expositor. Although Nicoll never wrote anything for the Expositor himself, under his editorship it guided the thinkers on theological questions, stimulated the younger scholars to sustained investigation, and afforded opportunity to many by giving to the public the fruits of their research. The Expositor won much praise from its contemporary journals, notably for the fourth series of the periodical. "The vast and varied reading condensed into these volumes makes them an indispensable adjunct to a clergyman's library."[3] "We cannot find space to say what we would wish to say of this the greatest and the best

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1 B.W., August 10, 1911.
2 Above, pp. 62 f.
3 Rock, January 26, 1892.

of our religious periodicals."[1] "It is only requisite to say, as we now do, that every new volume is full of fresh, interesting, and attractive matter."[2]

Also to Nicoll's credit were other achievements along this same line. Dr. Moffatt's translation of the Bible into modern English was the result of an idea which originated out of the creative mind of Robertson Nicoll. Nicoll had suggested to the theological students of Glasgow Free Church College that each student should make himself responsible for translating a single book of the Bible. "When all the other students one by one gave up the task, Moffatt went on to do the work single-handed."[3]

Although Nicoll never expressed himself in the Expositor, he had much to say about research and criticism in the B.W. Since he had become its editor, science had made extraordinary advances, which affected all fields of thought, and it was bound to tell upon theology. This influence restricted some tendencies while it stimulated others. The great secrets of the mysterious universe were gradually unlocked exposing fresh revelations of God, and revealing new truths. Nicoll recognised and accepted criticism, for which he had certain convictions. In his early editorial days he believed that "the real battle is over the Old Testament."[4] He pointed out that the new views of Wellhausen and his school were gaining almost universal acceptance in Germany, and among the majority of critical workers in Britain, such as Professors Driver and Cheyne. Nicoll told the B.W. readers that orthodox scholars and theologians should study and face

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1 Aberdeen Free Press, January 4, 1892.

2 Glasgow Herald, April 14, 1892. This comment was concerning the fifth series.

3 Arthur Porritt, More and More of Memories, (London: George Allen and Unwin, Ltd., 1947), p. 147. Moffatt's New Testament was completed in 1913, and in 1925 he finished the Old Testament.

4 B.W., August 12, 1887.

the serious difficulties raised. "It would be, in our opinion, dangerous policy to ignore the force of the new views or to discuss them in any way contemptuously. The large following they have found . . . must prevent us from further ignoring them."[1] But Nicoll was very reluctant to believe all that the new views offered. He accepted none of them without first a great searching of heart. What needed to be explained was the everlasting life and power of the sacred Scriptures. "The question is not how many elements there are, but how did they come to be the potent unity which we call the Old Testament?"[2] However, he said that there was no reason to feel alarmed. "We are sanguine that there will be a settlement of the doctrine of Inspiration as final and satisfactory as that of the doctrine of the Trinity."[3] But before that time came he was convinced that much must be thought and unthought, said and unsaid. Time and thought tempered his views. At the end of the same year in which he made the above utterances he wrote a leader entitled, "A Word to our Readers." In this he admitted that problems were arising which disturbed many, but the true wisdom was to face them calmly. "The policy of obscurantism and denunciation is doomed. Science must be studied; the Scriptures must be studied; all light must be welcomed; we must take heed not to slander or crush any prophet of God."[4]

In all of Nicoll's articles on the Old Testament and later on the New Testament there was one thread of thought which ran continuously through them all. That thought is most concisely expressed in a letter which he wrote to his wife. "All Scripture is God's Word. Higher Crit-

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1 B.W., August 12, 1887.
2 B.W., September 9, 1887.
3 B.W., August 12, 1887.
4 B.W., December 23, 1887.

icism shows us how the Bible is compiled, but there is one thing it cannot account for - how Life got into it. A human body is composed of different elements. Put these elements together - can you make Self?"[1] It was this thought, implicitly or explicitly stated, which formed the basis of almost all of his leaders and writings on Higher Criticism.

The emphasis of Nicoll's editorial expositions in the B.W. shifted from the Old Testament to the New. During 1901 he wrote a series of leaders concerning Christ, and the Christian attitude toward the prevailing criticism. Nicoll was well qualified to express an opinion upon this subject as he had read all of the books available on Higher Criticism of both the Old and the New Testament. In fact he wrote in "Claudius Clear" that his library was rich in books written on the subject,[2] but he kept abreast of the latest developments through his editorship of the Expositor. Thus he wrote ten leaders on "Christ and Recent Criticism," because he felt that the main issues of Christianity could not be left to the experts of the Higher Criticism. He collected these leaders together and published them in a volume called, The Church's One Foundation.

He believed that "the controversy about Christ is essentially a controversy about facts."[3] Also, "Christianity is not a sentiment, not a philosophy, not even a theological system, but a historical religion."[4] He made free use of quotations, documenting his statements as he went along. Especially did he use Dr. T. K. Cheyne's Encyclopaedia Biblica and such works as the Rev. James Moffatt's The Historical New Testament which had been published the previous year. It was doubtless the appear-

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1 Letter dated March 27, 1898. Quoted in C. R. Nicoll, Under the Bay Tree, p. 65.

2 B.W., April 29, 1915.

3 W.R. Nicoll, The Church's One Foundation, (London: Hodder and Stoughton /1901/, p. 1.

4 Ibid.

ance of these writings, and the character of the views they embodied, considered as coming from Christian scholars and ministers of Christian churches, which moved Nicoll to write the series of articles, which, with some additions, were published in his book.[1] Documented as it was he intended to make the book "intelligible to the plain man."[2] He has little to say concerning Old Testament criticism. It is to the destructive criticism of the New Testament, as more immediately and seriously threatening the Christian position, that the author gave attention.

He simplified the discussion by indicating at once the sine qua non of Christianity and placed the cardinal emphasis in respect to all criticism of the Christian Scriptures, where it doubtless belonged, on the facts concerning Jesus.

> The Church cannot without disloyalty and cowardice quarrel with criticism as such. It is not held absolutely to any theory of any book. It asks, and it is entitled to ask, the critic: Do you believe in the Incarnation and the Resurrection of Christ? If his reply is in the affirmative, his process and results are to be examined earnestly and calmly. If he replies in the negative, he has missed the way, and has put himself outside the Church of Christ. If he refuses to answer, his silence has to be interpreted.[3]

But if the things which the apostles taught concerning the unique and divine personality of their Lord were still to be believed, then the foundation of the church still stood secure and the strongholds of the faith were as impregnable as of old. As Westcott had said, "Christ the Word, the Son of God is Himself the Gospel."[4] The Incarnation of God in Christ and His the Resurrection, were essential contents of the Christian faith, and that criticism or doctrine which rejected these thereby surrendered the right to be called Christian.

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1 Because of these additions and revisions the book is herein referred to as being closer to W.R.N.'s finished thoughts on the subject. Except for the introduction and these minor notes and references the material is the same which was printed for the B.W. readers.

2 Ibid, prefatory note.

3 Ibid, p. 4.

4 Quoted in W.R. Nicoll, op. cit., p. 1.

It was but reasonable, too, Nicoll, insisted, that the reader should know the presuppositions of those who, under whatever name, assaulted the citadel of Christianity. What for example was their preconception as to the miraculous?

> If we assume at the threshold of Gospel study that everything in the nature of miracle is impossible, then the specific questions are decided before the criticism begins to operate in earnest. The naturalistic critics approach the Christian records with an a priori theory, and impose it upon them, twisting the record into agreement with it, and cutting out what cannot be twisted.[1]

It was such presupposition in regard to the miraculous that vitiated the work of such critics as Paulus, Eichorn, Strauss and Renan. The miraculous must be explained away or got rid of at any price. The result, as seen in the case of Strauss and Renan, was the utter rejection of Christianity, or at least such an emasculation of it as to rob it of any special value as a revelation and of all power as a redemptive force. According to Nicoll's view, some men of his day, men who held positions as ministers in the Christian church, men who had recently written books in the line of biblical criticism and articles in the Encyclopaedia Biblica, were occupying essentially the same ground as was held by Strauss and Renan, and were therefore to be counted among the hostile, rather than the friendly and helpful, critics of the Christian Scriptures. Of some of these in this connection he spoke with evident regret and pain, such men as Canon Cheyne and A. B. Bruce, for his personal relations with them had been most friendly, and their previous contributions to Biblical scholarship he regarded as highly valuable. The result, however, of such recent criticism as had been referred to was so to discredit the historical character of the gospel narratives that a haze of uncertainty enveloped every-

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1 Nicoll, The Church's One Foundation, p. 15.

thing, and so very little indeed was recognized as distinctly historical that it was impossible in such a dim light as those critics would leave, to form any very definite idea as to the character, the life and the teachings of Jesus. So the church's faith and hope was made to rest upon uncertainties.

Nicoll's arguments were directed, therefore, not against Biblical criticism as such, but against a criticism which indicated by its destructive results that, whether consciously so or not to its authors, it was really destructive of the essentials of Christianity. Of this criticism he conceived the ablest exponents to be, not the newer critics who perhaps only dimly perecived, if at all, the logical issue of the positions they had assumed, but rather such men as Renan, and especially Strauss, who, with remorseless logic, accepted the results of the destructive criticism. The argument therefore was not along new lines but along the old and well-worn lines of Christian apologetics. Nicoll's tone was one of firm confidence in the impregnability of the church's defence from all assaults along this line of attack. The arguments presented were, mainly, the argument from the manifest credibility of the gospel narratives in their essential features, the picture which they presented of Jesus in his unique majesty and sinlessness; the argument from the sinlessness of Jesus, with the alternative of ascribing to him vanity, arrogance and self-delusion if he was not sinless; the argument for the resurrection as supported by credible testimony and imperatively demanded by the results that follow; the arguments from Christian experience and from the transcendent type of human character which Christianity has produced in its most saintly representatives; these are the arguments which are restated in these articles printed in the B.W.. The names of the leaders are in themselves indicative

of their content: "Christ and the Newer Criticism"; "Modes of Access to Christ"; "The Historical Christ"; "The Sinlessness of Jesus"; "The Resurrection of our Lord from the Dead"; "Christ's Triumphant Captives"; "The Argument from the Aureole"; "The Christ of Dream"; and the final leader on the one significant word "'Keep!'" Of these articles, when they were published in book form, one religious contemporary said, "They are perfectly lucid, and just the very thing that the average man wants to make him understand what the 'newer criticism' is, and to what it will lead if its falsities are left unanswered."[1] Another said, "Dr. Nicoll's book will not remove all the perplexities which a friendly or hostile criticism raises, but to many a brave but fainting soldier of the King, it will doubtless be as a brook by the way, from which, having drunk, he shall find fresh courage to renew the conflict."[2]

Linked with Nicoll's beliefs about criticism was his belief about mysticism, the latter being a much older concept in his mind. It was Nicoll's belief that, "Criticism has changed and will change, but to the mystic the Word of God remains. In so far as the higher criticism is dangerous, he meets it with the highest criticism."[3] Nicoll's preoccupation with mysticism throughout his life was quite often in evidence. This is seen in his address, "The Secret of Christian Experience," his article "The Wisdom of God in a Mystery"[4] and also his "Christ and Recent Criticism" articles. In the latter one called, "The Argument from the

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1 Rock, January 3, 1902.
2 Guardian, April 9, 1902.
3 W.R. Nicoll, The Garden of Nuts, (London: Hodder and Stoughton, 1905), p. 58. The title of Nicoll's book was taken from Canticles vi., 2, "I went down into the Garden of Nuts to see the fruits of the valley."
4 Both of these are in Nicoll, Return to the Cross, (London: Isbister and Company, Ltd., 1897), pp. 9 f. and 97 f.

Aureole"[1] showed Nicoll's mysticism at its best.[2] However, four years later, he not only delivered a series of lectures on mysticism at the Glasgow Summer School of Theology in 1905 but printed them along with eleven other leaders on the same subject. These were later collected and published as a book on mysticism.[3] Although Nicoll never claimed to be a mystic[4] he was thoroughly versed in the subject. His father, before him, had been interested in the mystics. "He [Nicoll's father] read Upham's Madame Guyon to his young wife when she was dying, and she liked nothing so well. He had made a fair collection of mystics, including some rare books of Jacob Boehme, and often turned them over."[5] Nicoll seemed to have inherited this interest of his father's, for all during his lifetime, his wife wrote, he was prone to voicing sudden and almost mystical utterances.[6] So it was probably only natural that Nicoll should give to his B.W. readers his views on the subject. His lectures in Glasgow became his first four leaders on the subject. The first, "An Essay on Christian Mysticism" was printed in the B.W., June 29, 1905. This was a clear and sympathetic treatment, and except on the historical side, was rather an exhaustive study. The salient features of the movement were presented, dealing with several of its leading exponents, and providing an effective criticism of its main elements and methods. He described first "the in-

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1 To be found in Nicoll, The Church's One Foundation, pp. 173 f.

2 Much later, March 8, 1906, he gave an address Aspects of the Mystical Union. This was not only a B.W. leader also but became printed in his book Lamp of Sacrifice, (London: Hodder and Stoughton, 1906), pp. 261 f.

3 Nicoll, Garden of Nuts.

4 He said in his first lecture-leader concerning his expositions on mysticism, "I am deeply conscious of the great imperfection of my own equipment . . . . In what follows I must not be held as agreeing at every point with the mystics. Ibid, p. 23.

5 Nicoll, My Father, pp. 32 f.

6 For examples of this see C.R.N., Under the Bay Tree, p. 138.

ward way," the heart of all mystical theory. Next he took up the practical aspect of mysticism, and its influence on doctrinal and theological development after which he touched on the relation of mysticism to action. The second part of the series contained expositions of Scripture in the mystical vein.

> All Christian Mysticism rests on the primordial facts that we came out of the great centre, and that our duty and rest are in that centre. Mysticism is accordingly counsel to the exiled. It assumes that God is to be found and that therefore there is and can be only one great work in life, that work being to accomplish an individual reversion to the fontal source of souls.[1]

The B.W.'s editor told his readers that two preliminaries must be complied with, if one would tread the inward way. First, there must be the "cutting of correspondence with inferior things; and second the creating of a new correspondence with things above."[2] The materialistic view of the world and the mystical are precisely antithetic. The former regards the world as so much dead and meaningless matter. Its gospel, as Carlyle had said, is "a gospel of dirt." But the mystic finds the whole universe a succession of omens and signs. "Everything that exists is an outward expression of an inward thought of God."[3] Everything, in fact, is sacramental of spiritual things; and has in its shadow the substance of some heavenly truth.

> "Flower in the crannied wall,
> I pluck you out of the crannies,
> I hold you here, root and all, in my hand,
> Little flower - but <u>if</u> I could understand
> What you are, root and all, and all in all,
> I should know what God and man is."[4]

Along this line of spiritual inference the mystic is caught up into God,

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1 Nicoll, <u>Garden of Nuts</u>, p. 24.
2 <u>Ibid</u>, p. 33.
3 <u>Ibid</u>.
4 Quoted in Nicoll, <u>Garden of Nuts</u>, p. 35.

as Elias was into heaven, and his "attachment" is established with heavenly things.

The influence of mysticism had been constantly exemplified in counteracting the dialectical struggles of theological disputants. It had always discouraged hard and fast definitions, as, for instance, in such a doctrine as the Atonement. It was wishful to revere rather than to dissect; and constantly it had checked rash cut-and-dry doctrinaire statements of religious truth. This was particularly true in regard to Holy Scripture. Nicoll could not, of course, advocate the revival of the purely mystical and allegorical reading of the Bible. For that made history a dead history, but he thought the Church was in danger of losing the old key to Scripture, which consisted in the interpretation of Scripture by Scripture itself. "The illustration of the New Testament by the Old, of the Old Testament by the New, is the nourishment of faithful souls."[1] In this respect he thought that the preaching of his day fell far below the level of that of the past.

The mystic need not be opposed to the visible church. But he has deep affinities that bind him inwardly to many from whom he is outwardly divided. This, claimed Nicoll, has in all ages been the great lesson of mysticism, its insistence on the hidden church, in which the clash and clang of doctrines and schisms are hushed, and all are spiritually "one," who are "in Christ Jesus." Indeed, the true hope of a united Church lies in the Holy Assembly of the mystic.

> It is one of the chief alleviations of the sorrow of earthly disunion that we may ever and anon come to the surprised and joyful consciousness that the brother who is bearing another name and is fighting in another army is, in reality, at one with us in the Mystical

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1 Ibid, p. 82.

> Holy Church. Those who seem spectral and far off, if not positively alien and hostile, are discerned as the true brothers of our hearts. Wherefore it is the wont of mystics to claim this friendship, and to exact recognition "in all houses, temples, and tarrying places of the fraternity." In the fellowship of the Holy Assembly is peace. There we escape the boundless weariness of the spirit of the world. There we may win and wear that Rose, which is the symbol of the joy of the two Jerusalems.[1]

It was Nicoll's desire to make his last few leaders in his series a blend of the old and the new in the exposition of Scripture. Many were very beautiful sermon-like leaders in which the tone and spirit of Christian mysticism were reproduced very well. They were a twentieth-century effort to see Christ in the Scripture, and to show how, as all roads lead to Rome, all the avenues of Scripture interpretation lead up to Him.

Nicoll believed in preaching. He believed in its efficacy and never tired of preaching from the pulpit or from the columns of the B.W.. But he disliked work that was carelessly done.

> As for sermons, I could never listen comfortably to any that were not clearly divided. If you know that the preacher has a beginning, a middle, and an end, you may walk alongside of him. But if there is no continuity in the discourse, if there is no reason why it should end at one point rather than another, if there is no recognisable march of thought, the dreariness of the whole is intolerable to me.[2]

Nicoll evidently never succombed to this error in his sermons. Many people who had heard him preach remarked about his ability. Dr. George Adam Smith wrote, "I remember while he was still a young minister at Dufftown hearing him preach in Free St. George's Edinburgh, and being struck, boy as I was, with the originality of his sermon. This quality he has preserved throughout."[3] This originality, which pervaded Nicoll's entire life, was so pronounced in his sermons that many have commented upon it.

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1 Ibid, pp. 74 f.
2 Nicoll, Seen and Unseen, p. 154.
3 The Very Rev. Sir George Adam Smith, D.D., "Personal Tributes," B.W., May 10, 1923.

One specific occasion so impressed at least one listener that a memory was created which lasted for over forty years.

> A correspondent tells me of an occasion when Sir William preached in a village church near Kelso 40 years ago. The text was, "He that believeth and is baptised shall be saved, but he that believeth not shall be damned." For more than half an hour the preacher expounded the first part of his text and explained all that it implied. When he came to the second part he merely said: "I do not know very much about it. I do not care to speak of it. God save us all from it. Amen." The impression created as he closed the Book was so intense that the memory of it has lasted all these years.[1]

The great majority of newspaper articles reporting his sermons and speeches commented on his weak voice; a few mentioned his excellent articulation which enabled any size of audience to understand him, but almost all of them agreed that he gave to his listeners a vital message which reached out to all the people and made them eager to return a second time. His own church offers, perhaps, the best commentary on this.

> It was a great pleasure to the Lumsden U.F. Church . . ., to listen to the post-Communion address which he gave every August. He stepped forward to the choir-rail and spoke in simple words, looking earnestly all the while at the people and making the spirit of the message felt by all.[2]

Nicoll had always been convinced that it was a personal challenge that a preacher should take. The Gospel had to be preached in personal terms. As for himself he was always intimately personal, not only in his own preaching but in all his speaking, and in particular in his writings in the B.W.. These leaders, regardless of their subject, were intimately personal. When Nicoll became editor of the B.W., because of his health, he had given up "pulpit" preaching but he never ceased to "preach" in his leaders. These sermonic leaders were called by Dr. Joseph Parker, the minister's "weekly loaf." A portion of their effectiveness and useful-

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1 Edinburgh Evening News, May 9, 1923.
2 J. Caseby, "A Message from Lumsden," B.W., May 10, 1923.

ness may be judged from the comments of those who read them, and used them.

> Never, surely, were there such leaders in a weekly journal as those that found a place on the front page of the "B.W." in its earliest days . . . articles that have clarified thought, widened outlook, warmed hearts, and set life to a new and richer music. Their echo was in thousands of sermons and their inspiration in thousands of lives.[1]

Also, "We may never know how much Sir William has done for faith. The young men of this day and generation have been brought up on The British Weekly . . . in the midst of these /political and literary distractions/ and other fearful distractions, he has ever held true to the Man of Galilee, and, for this reason, they love and admire him."[2] Annie Swan leaves the record,

> But its /B.W.'s/ motive power was its clear exposition and presentation of the Gospel of Jesus Christ. I heard a minister say once that more sermons were built on the leading article in the British Weekly than on any other foundation, the Bible not excepted. It may sound rather a bald statement, but as the front page of the British Weekly was God's page, the conclusion might not be so far amiss.[3]

A more recent writer has said of these leaders, "They determined an evangelical note in the representative pulpit utterances of Nonconformity. Preaching would be more powerful and effective, we think, for some such national leadership in religious journalism to-day."[4]

All of Nicoll's leaders were by construction and unction sermonic but many each year were simply sermons which had been preached or sermons which were in manuscript form. However, they were sermons. Eventually

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1 Henry Smith, "Sir W. Robertson Nicoll," The United Methodist, December 7, 1916.

2 The Indian Witness, March 7, 1911.

3 Annie S. Swan, "Robertson Nicoll," Great Christians, (ed. by R.S. Forman), (London: Ivor Nicholson and Watson, 1933), p. 388.

4 Harry Escott, God Signs His Name, (London: Epworth Press, 1940), p. 16.

enough of these leader-sermons would accumulate to warrant Nicoll publishing them as a book.[1] It is safe to say that these religious leaders contained the whole of Nicoll's theology, the main lines of his thought about Christian life and Christian doctrine. He was a man of wide tolerance in religious thought, but there is reason to believe that in his heart he never travelled far from the strong evangelical principles of his early life, as set down in Calls to Christ,[2] and in his other early books which had a clear and definite Gospel message.[3] In this respect an interesting parallel shows itself between these very early works and Nicoll's leader "The Face of Jesus Christ," May 23, 1918, which Nicoll himself called his "1918 theology." This trend was due perhaps to the particular teachings he emphasized. His deep perception of the fatherhood of God and the redeeming grace of Christ's life and death were never lost sight of in his religious writing. His theology was fairly conservative. On the whole he took the critical position with reference to the Old Testament, though his occasional hesitations permitted the traditionalists to attack him. He was a Calvinist by training, and so he remained all his life. He was very emphatic in his affirmation of the Deity of our Lord, and his most frequent pronouncements were on the doctrine of the Atonement.

Thus it was that his theology had two foci. One was the doctrine of the Cross, the defence of which was one of his intellectual passions. He believed that the Cross was central to the Christian faith and he never

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1 Thus in 1894, he had published Ten Minute Sermons; in 1897, The Return to the Cross; in 1906, The Lamp of Sacrifice; and in 1910, Sunday Evening. The first two were reprinted in 1908 and 1910 respectively.

2 This book was praised by Dr. Parker in the Fountain as a model of Christian expostulation and pleading. Prof. Henry Drummond in the Daily Review and Mr. Spurgeon in the Sword and the Trowel also praised it.

3 e.g. The Incarnate Saviour.

hesitated to say so. He wrote of our redemption as one who never ceased to be awed at the wonder of it all. "The Atonement is the central doctrine, the pivot of Christianity."[1] The other focus of his religious thought was the doctrine of Immortality. The need of this forced itself upon him with great intensity as he himself passed through the fires of great personal sorrow. As a Celt he thought much of death.

> Yes; the further pier of the bridge that spans life rests on the unseen shore. Let our preachers testify boldly of the other life. This life is much as the time for discipline, for preparation, for hearing and obeying the Spirit and the Bride. But it is little as the time for happiness, for success, even for achievement.[2]

Nicoll could always state what he wanted to say in as few words as possible. Perhaps this liking for conciseness made him admire hymns and poetry. Of the latter he wrote many examples, but it was the hymns that summed up his feelings. His favourite hymn was "Rock of Ages." He once wrote that whenever he took up a new hymnal, the first thing he would look for was to see if "Rock of Ages" was included. "The future of religion lies mainly with the churches that include it . . . all the theology of the Cross has been fused into the language of intense simplicity in the lines . . . [quoting the second and third verses]. This is theology accurate and complete."[3] In like manner another favourite hymn summed up his belief in Immortality, and expressed his own teaching on future things. It was Baring Gould's, "On the Resurrection morning." When his daughter's father-in-law died he wrote to her, "I like to think that the last time he was here we sang 'On the Resurrection morning.' That is the truth about Death."[4] These were the two hymns sung at Nicoll's funeral.

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1 B.W., April 29, 1887.
2 B.W., August 26, 1887.
3 C.R. Nicoll, Under the Bay Tree, p. 143 n.
4 Letter from W.R.N. to his daughter, Constance, March 19, 1910. Quoted in Darlow, p. 214.

This love of conciseness, coupled with the ability to express ideas in a terse and pleasing manner, made Nicoll's leader-sermons complete units in themselves. He resembled Spurgeon in this respect. He knew Spurgeon's works thoroughly and had read everything that he wrote.[1] It might be stated with a good deal of truth that Nicoll, through his B.W. leaders, captured the constituency of Spurgeon, especially in Nicoll's native Scotland. In the glens and islands of his native land the same readers who had pored over Spurgeon's sermons, read Nicoll's leaders week after week to the last word; for in both there was the same readableness, and both were as comprehensible to the common man. Eventually, however, Nicoll reached a far wider public, his writings being perused by high and low; and all interested in the advancement of Christian truth and in the reconciliation of religions with other knowledge learned to look to the B.W. to see what was being said on the side of earnest religion. "By his example of open-mindedness and his unswerving loyalty to the faith once for all delivered to the saints, he helped many a man from becoming a theological extremist."[2]

Nicoll's life of Jesus Christ, The Incarnate Saviour, written during his ministerial days, shows the surface marks of sustained, leisurely searching thought, of vast stores of reading, and of deep vision. It was written to show (1) that Jesus Christ was God and man in two distinct natures and two persons; (2) that Jesus Christ came to suffer in order that He might save; (3) that the words, works and thoughts of Christ were in sweet and perfect accord. And the author achieved his purpose in

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1 For his estimate of Spurgeon and his knowledge of him see Nicoll, Princes of the Church, pp. 47 f. Also C.R. Nicoll, Under the Bay Tree, passim.

2 The Baptist Times and Freeman, May 11, 1923.

a sternly orthodox and fervidly evangelical way. Of it, a review in Spurgeon's paper said,

> To read it, has been an unalloyed pleasure, a mental enriching, and we believe a permanent profiting. The author has used his treasures of varied reading to fine account in writing these cameo-studies of the Great Biography; but he is never a reproducer, he has touched all with his own originality and genius. All over the pages lie scattered luminous suggestions that, to an open-eyed preacher, will surely give birth to many sermons; yet the style is so crystal and clear, that the ordinary reader cannot miss its manifold beauties.[1]

Readers of his subsequent writings can notice that Nicoll's main lines of thought about Christian life and Christian doctrine were already laid down once and for all when he wrote this book. Here was that emphasis upon the Divine Person of Christ, upon the centrality of the Cross, upon the all-sufficiency of Christ for all the needs and perlexity of the soul in life and death which was found running through all of his subsequent writings.

If his emphasis did not change, his style did. Gradually his views were couched in the simplicity and beauty of style which became so well known to his readers. As Nicoll's health returned he began to accept pulpit engagements, which increased with the years. Many, if not all, of these sermons he printed as leaders in the B.W.. Of the many leader-sermons Nicoll produced over the years perhaps his best selection for style and expression is found in the volume he called The Lamp of Sacrifice, published in 1906. These were a group of sermons preached on special occasions, which were then printed as leaders in the B.W., and later printed in book form. They were devoted to the expression of the ancient evangelical faith, in all its positive fulness and force. There was no anxiety over the Gospel to be delivered, as if defence or apology

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1 Sword and the Trowel, October, 1897.

were needed. The messages were given in firm outlines, with unhesitating confidence, and with vigorous converting energy. "We, risen and crucified, are to preach Christ Divine, crucified, risen."[1] There was to be no shirking the full truth, no blinking the seriousness of the issues, no half-measures, and twilight compromises.

> We confront the unbelieving world in the power of the Resurrection. The world demands to see the Cross of Christ. Except it behold the print of the nails, it will not believe . . . . The Christ Who suffered and died for us yielded Himself of His royal will in sacrifice, that He might restore His guilty people to the lost rank and franchises of the sons of God. So by faith we lay our hands on His dear Head, and confess our sins. Believing, we rejoice to see the curse removed.[2]

As illustrations of his style and method one or two sermons will suffice. Perhaps the best example was "The Watershed," for not only was the history of its inspiration known, but it was one of the best-received of this group. This sermon was preached at the dedication of the new Wesleyan Hall in Edinburgh, on October 7, 1901,[3] from the text "We preach Christ Crucified." Lady Nicoll relates how she and her husband were driving over the Lecht Road near Tomintoul in Aberdeenshire when he became interested in the watershed of the burn that flowed from the summit of the col. Here it was that he noticed that it seemed to be little more than a stone that turned the tiny streams northward, towards the Avon and the Spey, and southward, towards the Don. It reminded him of Oliver Wendell Holmes' poem, which he quoted:

> So from the heights of will
> Life's parting stream descends,
> And, as a moment turns its slender rill,
> Each widening torrent bends -
>
> From the same cradle's side,
> From the same mother's knee -
> One to long darkness and the frozen tide,
> One to Peaceful Sea![4]

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1 Nicoll, Lamp of Sacrifice, p. 78.
2 Ibid, p. 86 and p. 92.
3 Printed as a leader in the B.W., October 10, 1901.
4 Quoted in C.R. Nicoll, Under the Bay Tree, pp. 166 f.

> This started his thought of the Divinity of Christ as a watershed parting the stream of doctrine into two courses, one teaching Christ as creature only, crucified, dead - flowing "north to long darkness and the frozen tide"; the other teaching Christ as Divine, crucified, risen - flowing "south to the Peaceful Sea."[1]

"It is the word Divine which turns the course. The essence of heresy is the assertion that Christ is a creature. No matter how loftily He may be conceived of, if His Deity is denied the end is the long darkness and the frozen tide."[2] Nicoll declared that the Deity of our Lord and His Sacrifice were inextricably one.

> It is the Deity of Christ which gives meaning to His atonement. We must not shrink from the strongest words that Scripture uses; rather we must glory in them. The Church of God has been purchased by the blood of God. Whenever we preach Christ, whenever we sit at His Table, we show forth the Lord's death. It is the Deity of Christ that gave His death its significance in regard to sin. The blood of man could not put away sin any more than the blood of bulls and goats could.[3]

The conclusion was as impressive as the evolution of the theme. He stated that the Methodists had pointed the way to the other churches in dealing with the sunken masses. He told them that their mission was to the church, "to the world, and, not least, to the church outside the churches . . . . We must waken God before we waken the dim sunken masses. What Savanarola cried in the crisis of his church I would repeat, 'Wake Christ! Wake Christ!'"[4] Not everyone agreed with Nicoll's theology. Denney and Nicoll often exchanged letters about this very tenet - the deity of Christ.[5] But as for the sermon itself it won many acclamations. "Edinburgh hearers speak of this [the "Watershed" sermon] as perhaps Dr.

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1 Ibid, p. 167.
2 W.R. Nicoll, Lamp of Sacrifice, p. 78.
3 Ibid, p. 84.
4 Ibid, p. 94 and p. 96.
5 See Letters of Denney, p. 121 and p. 124.

Nicoll's greatest sermon."[1] A contemporary religious journal remarked,

> There is probably no one who does the cause of true Evangelicalism in England so much real service as Dr. Robertson Nicoll. His sermon on "The Watershed," . . . was a noble presentation of the very heart of our Evangelical creed, while his articles are generally of an unusually helpful and uplifting character. Principal Rainy once remarked to me that it was impossible to over-estimate the good done by Dr. Nicoll's articles on the Atonement, and the same thing is true of the articles on the Holy Spirit. All the Churches are Dr. Nicoll's debtors, and have much reason to wish that his bow may long abide in strength.[2]

The Methodist Times said, "Among his numerous books "The Lamp of Sacrifice" is the greatest. The sermon entitled "The Watershed," . . . is the deepest in the volume."[3]

With few exceptions his spoken sermons were printed as leaders in the religious weekly he edited. They were of a high type and his readers were quick to recognize their merits. Thus there were many who said as Dr. Moffatt said, " . . . he did very much to raise the level and widen the range of preaching in this country."[4] But if he elevated preaching through his printed sermons, he elevated life through his "Claudius Clear" writings. Such writings reveal him as a wise guide in the midst of the strangeness and the unsuspected meanings of the wonderful adventure of human living. In fact, for years numbers of people all over the English-speaking world looked week after week with relish to the mental quickening and the practical guidance of a wide-ranging mind with a curious gift for finding and telling just what the readers wanted to know, as they had given to them in the "Correspondence of Claudius Clear." One of the greatest characteristics of Nicoll was his consuming interest in human

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1 J. T. Stoddart, William Robertson Nicoll, p. 139.
2 The Presbyterian, November 7, 1901.
3 The Methodist Times, May 10, 1923.
4 Rev. Prof. James Moffatt, D.D., D.Litt., "More Personal Tributes," B.W., May 10, 1923.

nature. It was his ability to convey his indomitable Christian hopefulness to his readers that made his "letters" so readable. The B.W. conducted a contest early in its career, seeking to find out what features its readers liked, and in what order. "Claudius Clear" won the vote by a large majority, possibly because it appealed to the widest number of people, whereas the other features were more limited e.g. the political articles appealed to some and not others, the sermons were read by those interested in sermons, but everyone seemed to have read "Claudius Clear." These essays were a clever achievement in journalism, if the art of journalism be considered as "good talk" on any subject from which human interest may be extracted. They were moral in their aspect, nearer to sermon-writing than to actual letter-writing even in their literary form. The moralist is at best from the literary point of view when he allows himself the relaxation of forgetting that he has a moral to teach. In that way the moral more adroitly concealed is often most effectively preached. One aim of the "letters" was to let more sunshine into one's every-day life - how to make the best of life. He was deeply concerned with the practical aspects of life, that life should be made all that it might be. He had but little patience with those who dreamed and were content merely to dream. He was all for the strenuous existence, the existence which produced results.

These "Claudius Clear" letters Nicoll collected together from out of the B.W. pages and selections were published in four successive volumes.[1] The first and perhaps most widely received was Letters on Life. This volume was typical of the four, in fact, it was a fair sampling,

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1 Letters on Life, 1901; The Day Book of Claudius Clear, 1905; The Round of the Clock, 1910; A Bookman's Letters, 1913.

except for the literary "letters," of most of "Claudius Clear." These letters taught the lesson of making one's happiness out of small things. They covered the whole gamut of everyday life: conversation, overwork, good manners, order and method, and growing old. Nicoll was not afraid of the obvious or even of the common place. In his "The Art of Life" he frankly admitted that such precepts as he laid down "often read like trite, threadbare, incontestable platitudes."[1] Life in spite of so many ages of experience, was still no easier to the neophyte. Hence it was still desirable to reiterate the lessons that age after age had discovered for itself, usually too late to act upon them.

> The highest wisdom is to be found in commonplaces. The best help that can be rendered to humanity is the representation of commonplaces as they are confirmed and illuminated by experience. Pascal said that the best books were the books which each man thought he could have written for himself.[2]

Many writers were afraid of producing such simple and obvious works. But all of Nicoll's writings had one outstanding virtue and that is that they were always easily understood by the plain man as well as the highly-educated; in a word, they were clear. Perhaps Nicoll had this quality in mind when he picked his most famous pen name - "Claudius Clear."

An example of his clarity and ability to state a great truth with beauty and style, is found in "The Art of Life." He began this essay by consulting Hawthorne's "Grandfather's Armchair," from which he learned that the secret of happiness has been revealed to every one of us; that it is not necessary for us to ascend into heaven to bring it down from above, or to dig into the depths of the earth to bring it up from beneath. It is always within our reach, if we have but eyes to see. Justice, Truth,

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1 W.R. Nicoll, Letters on Life, p. 2.
2 Ibid, p. 3.

and Love are the ingredients which enter into the compound which constitutes the true philosopher's stone which transmutes all it touches into gold. But though everybody has at least a dim perception of this truth and in his saner moments is ready to admit it, according to the two hundred years' observation and experience of the "Armchair," both individuals and communities were apt to overlook and forget it so much, that the thoughtful onlooker would conclude that they never had been aware of it, or known anything about it. Little studies of this kind were Nicoll's particular province.

That there is an art of life which needed to be cultivated, he showed by many and striking examples. It is the weeds that grow spontaneously; the precious fruits of the earth need to be cultivated. "Claudius Clear" made it evident also that attention to the art of life would help his readers to make the best of themselves, and the best of things. Even the "powerful distemper of old age" may be so utilized by this art as to rob it of its power to mar happiness. Nicoll shows, too, how attention to the art of life would not only enable one to make the most of life, in the sense of bringing the largest amount of enjoyment to oneself, but to prepare one to be the greatest source of happiness to others of which one was capable.

The preaching was uppermost in "Claudius Clear" as it was in most of Nicoll's writings. His freedom from cant, his literary knowledge and breadth of experience made these "preachings" on everyday ethics and religion satisfying reading.

CHAPTER X

Conclusion

Religious journalism in one form or another is as old as history itself, but since the introduction of the printing press into Britain the story of its evolution into its present form may be traced. The forerunners of the religious press, as we have come to know it, had its roots in the eighteenth century, however, its real growth and its greatest advance in its history had been in the nineteenth century was a great testing ground for all kinds of journalism. The mechanical age brought about huge strides in the production of paper and the methods of printing. The reading public's tastes were changing and the editors and owners of papers were striving to couch their writings in forms and language which appealed to those tastes. These facts influenced the development of journalism in all of its phases. Even in the beginning of the second half of the nineteenth century, and for two or three decades following, newspapers and journals were very stilted and serious productions compared with modern standards. There were no pictures, except a wood-cut now and then, few headlines, great masses of solid print and little news on any subject other than politics. Circulations were small and readers were an educated and serious public. Suddenly all this was changed. Progressively the duties on advertisements, news, and paper were abolished and the cheap press was a reality. Later, when the Elementary Education Act greatly increased the number of readers, the means were at hand with which to meet the need. The 1880's seemed to be the decade in which these factors produced their greatest fruition. It was in that decade,

also, that the new journalism gave new life and blood to the older journalism. "The historian of nineteenth century journalism, wrote Mr. George Catkin in an appreciation some ten years ago, will pay special attention to the eighties."[1] Those were years of vigour and enterprise. Popular weeklies with unheard-of circulations were born. It was the advent of the "crisp" and the "snappy," of illustrated interviews, and short stories. It was in that decade that the Rev. W. Robertson Nicoll started the British Weekly. It was a child of the age, and achieved almost instant success.

Other religious journals reaped the benefits of that era also. Those were the golden days of the press. For thirty years after the Education Act of 1870 there was brought into existence a vast new public which had been taught to read. Besides enlarging the potential sales capacity of religious journals, it had another indirect influence on those papers. Almost all periodicals of that period began to publish novels in serial form. Previously novelists wrote for the entire novel-reading public. Such writers as Scott and Dickens were recognized as the best novelists because they had the biggest sales. But at the end of the century the novelists could be separated into two classes. There were those, such as George Eliot and George Meredith, who wrote for a comparatively small public with a style pitched for the reader of a high degree of intelligence and education, while writers like Marie Corelli, author of The Sorrows of Satan and Mrs. Henry Wood, author of East Lynne wrote for a public through a medium usually frowned upon by good critics. It was usually the writers of the latter class which made up the serials

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1 Quoted in the Japan Chronicle, May 8, 1923.

in the pages of the periodicals which embraced the new journalism. They were a necessary addition to any paper which desired to hold the attention of the new reading public. So it was that the successful papers made use of all of the mechanical improvements and the scientific advancements, and they profited by the new freedom from duties and the vast new reading publics.

But a religious periodical's influence depended on more than those assets. The rapid growth of religious journalism meant that all who were engaged in it were concerned with the formidable problem of using it to the best advantage. Its influence was growing in proportion to its physical growth. The press and the pulpit always had been linked, but the latter had been hindered in its use of the former by the lack of developments such as have just been discussed. Those hindrances were eliminated at the end of the last century, and the power of religious journalism assumed new heights. That power and influence which led and formed the readers' opinion, was done in the main, through the leading articles. There were many people, devoid of passion or opinion, who were incapable of making up their minds. The new readers brought into existence by the Education Act of 1870 could read and write, but because school ended at fourteen at the latest, they were in no sense educated. The truly educated class was not enlarged; that came about with the Balfour's Act of 1902. The leaders helped to make up the minds of those who vacillated. Those whose minds were more set had their views confirmed, or shaken, by a well-written leader. Others, more intelligent, read and pondered the arguments put forth, much as a judge might listen to the pleadings of advocates. Those made up their minds, but were assisted in the process by the reasoning in the leaders. Thus, under an intelligent and keen editor, a periodi-

cal was able to wield considerable power. That was the basis of a paper's influence in the politically-minded era when the papers were read mostly by the men of the house, but much of that influence lingered even in the latter part of the last century, even when the papers' appeal catered more for the entire family. It was done by the simple expedient of making the leaders shorter, more to the point, in almost a condensation of its previous form with the aid of cross-headings. Nowadays, the main power of a newspaper is exerted through its news columns. The times have changed since writing editors ruled the land.

Into that second half of the nineteenth century was born William Robertson Nicoll. His early life was spent in the rugged Highland country of Aberdeenshire. As a child of the manse his training and environment were conducive to establishing a firm religious foundation. Yet he considered himself fortunate as he felt it might have turned out otherwise. Mr. Gosse (later Sir Edmund) wrote a book about his own religious and literary training in a Puritan household of the strictest type. W.R.N. was so impressed by the contrast between Mr. Gosse's background and his own that he wrote a biography of his own father in order to show the difference.[1] In the preface to that book he commented on the contrast.

> He /Mr. Gosse/ lays stress on the manner in which his young life was cabined, cribbed, and confined, on the continual religious pressure brought to bear upon him, and on his father's refusal to face all the facts of science. During the same period I was brought up in a Scottish manse, and in an atmosphere of religious belief almost as rigid and quite as faithful and sincere as that of Mr. Philip Gosse. But the methods my father adopted with his children were, entirely different - so different that I have been moved to describe them.[2]

The difference in the end was that Mr. Gosse became an infidel while Nicoll became an ordained minister and the foremost religious journalist

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1 W.R. Nicoll, My Father
2 Ibid, preface.

of the nineteenth century.

Nicoll seems to have been born with the desire to learn, and, with such a desire, his birthplace was a most advantageous spot. His father, a bibliophile and an inveterate bookworm, had gathered together under the roof of the small manse in Lumsden a huge library. The harsh northern winters made fireside reading a pleasant pastime during the long evenings. With a well thought-out library at his instant disposal Nicoll's knowledge of literature and especially religion and theology was well-grounded before he left home. When he did leave it was to go to Aberdeen where he attended the University and the Free Church College. He entered the University at the age of fourteen and after eight years of hard work and frugal living, he graduated with honours to become ordained the same year. His first charge of Dufftown, being another northern village with long snow-bound winters, gave him further opportunity to fulfil his ceaseless urge to read. Besides his reading and preaching he found time to write for many periodicals and also to publish a book or two. Later he became the minister of the Kelso Free Church where he laboured with church work and local activities. He married, reared two children, travelled on the Continent, became a literary adviser to an Edinburgh firm, wrote two books and edited others, became editor of the Expositor, and finally reached the turning-point in his life. That turning-point was an illness that forced him to resign the pulpit ministry and turn to other work. Fortunately, during Nicoll's eight years in the Kelso manse, he had made many literary contacts. Those contacts were the factors which were to shape the rest of his life.

The illness which had prevented him from pursuing his chosen life's work had struck him at the age of thirty-five years after twelve years in

the active ministry. He settled in London. The publishing firm of Messrs. Hodder and Stoughton offered to start a weekly religious paper if Nicoll would be the editor. Nicoll accepted the offer and in 1886 the British Weekly was started on its way to fame and fortune. In the beginning the B.W. was a difficult undertaking, a venture of faith. It was a courageous thing to thrust out into the crowded and competitive press world with a new paper. Hodder and Stoughton gave Nicoll a completely free hand. They furnished the capital for the expensive initial launching and Nicoll supplied the ingenuity, the foresight, and the intellectual editorship which were to carry the enterprise to success.

Nicoll knew the qualities that would make a religious journal a success and he had the energy and drive to see them incorporated. He used all of the resources available. He used the best of the newer journalism, and combined in it features for the entire family. The religious element was to be predominant throughout. He aimed his leaders and the articles not only at the Church's public but also the public beyond; he directed them at the general public in a popular vein. His editorial judgment was shrewd and clever. He managed to get enough varied features into each number of his religious journal to hold a great variety of readers. Those who did not care for its religious character began to take the paper for its literary features.[1] It became a great vogue among the literary men, many of them Anglicans, which meant that it reached into Anglican Church circles where on its feligious character it would not be acceptable because of its prevailing Nonconformity. Politically it was

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1 One journalist wrote, "I know, as a matter of fact, that numbers of Churchmen study it /the B.W./ regularly, not only for the presentation of views to which they do not subscribe, but because of the shrewd philosophy of the editor in his "Correspondence of Claudius Clear," and for his usually well-informed "Rambling Remarks," signed "Man of Kent."" The Daily Graphic, November 13, 1909.

Liberal, but as the Nonconformists were for the most part Liberals in politics, Nicoll knew that there was not much chance of anybody disliking his politics who liked his religious position. He put in a "corner" filled with items of special interest to the ladies, e.g. household hints, fashion notes, stories, and a "letter for ladies." He regarded religion, literature, politics and the rest, not as isolated manifestations of human thought and emotion, but as one complex of closely-related influences.

In Nicoll's day it was the leader which influenced people. The outstanding editors had won their place usually by their outstanding leaders. Nicoll was no exception and one of the B.W.'s main characteristics from the beginning was its religious leading article. "Every one of these leaders is a sermon, packed with culture, and shot through with a passionate strain of devotional music, combined with great elegance and even precision of form."[1] But his type of leader writing was new and fresh, rarely equalled in the other papers. He knew that the old style of leaders were spt to be long and heavy, sounding eloquent but meaning so little.[2] He also knew that that type of leading article was hastily skimmed if it was read at all.[3] So it was that he put much emphasis on the leading article: he made it readable by directness, clarity, and an individualistic style.[4] He could have conformed to the old set standards but if he had he would have become just another journalist.

> If Pegasus be put in harness, his wings will infallibly get in his way. There is no help for it, but either to take off the harness, or to cut off the wings. Many a youthful Pegasus succeeds, after

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1 Kelso Mail, August 17, 1892.

2 For examples of this style of leader-writing see C.E. Montague, A Hind Let Loose.

3 For his own words on this, written in 1889, see his book James Macdonell, pp. 26 f.

4 Excellent comments on Nicoll's style are given in Dixon Scott, Men of Letters, pp. 206 f. and John Adams, "W.R.N.," Bookman, June, 1923.

> some little trouble, in getting rid of those ethereal appendages, and settles down into a good steady useful hack. Yet, though the beaten way be paved with gold, were it not better, somehow, after all, since he had wings, to have flown?[1]

Nicoll, and the paper he edited, both soared to great heights once the editor had found his "wings." He made the British Weekly out of himself. In it he combined the ideal and the practical, a rare combination, which could have been done only by a dreamer who was also a man of affairs.

From the beginning the B.W. was almost a part of him. His personality largely pervaded every page of his paper. The evidence of his editorship was noticeable in every phase of its production. He was the editor, leader-writer; he wrote articles that were regarded as classics of devotional literature, and articles which were political polemics, the "Man of Kent" column, gossipy paragraphs and much more. One journalist said, "Dr. Nicoll is not a man - he is an army of men directed by one cool controlling brain."[2] Many people recognized this quality and commented on it. James Barrie, after Nicoll's death, wrote,

> He made the British Weekly "off his own bat" - made it by himself out of himself; it was so full of his personality that he came stalking out of all the pages, meeting every reader face to face, so that it can truly be said he paid a visit every week to every person who took in the paper. Myriads of people must have grown up under his guidance, and learned many of the lessons of life from him, and, next to those who worked for him, they are the ones who will miss him most. But we, his contributors, who helped him to however slight and extent, will miss him most of all, remembering his thousand kindnesses, his glorious enthusiasms and the passion of his soul.[3]

Of course there were many who thought that this domination of one paper, so completely, by one person was an error of judgment and a presumption of the editor. But Nicoll knew his journalism and he had an

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1 Conder, Josiah Conder, p. 27.
2 James Douglas, quoted in C.R. Nicoll, Under the Bay Tree, p. 113.
3 J.M. Barrie, "Personal Tributes," B.W., May 10, 1923.

uncanny way of knowing what the public wanted. He believed as Saintsbury did.

> That which is written by many hands will seldom be as bad, but can never be as good, as that which is written by one; that which takes its texts and starting points from suggested matters of the moment will generally escape the occasional dulness, but can rarely attain the occasional excellence of the meditated and original sprout of an individual brain.[1]

The B.W. was the sprout of Nicoll's individual brain, but it was even more.

One of the innovations which Nicoll incorporated in his paper from the beginning was that of signed articles. It was not until the second half of the nineteenth century that the anonymous writing began to give way to the signed article and even then the transition was slow. There was very strong feeling against the signed article at first, but that feeling began to give way in favour of knowing its authors.[2] Since the public dictated to a great extent, the policy of the press, most papers adopted the innovation and at the beginning of the 1914-18 war there were only one or two papers in the press-world which remained complete fortresses of anonymity. Signed articles, now the general rule, may not seem to be over-important, but they were one of the keys to Nicoll's power and success. He made many friends of authors and writers. He could see the potentiality within a writer and those he knew would be able to become a success he put to work for him writing and editing, but always giving them full credit - letting them sign their own work. Thus he was given credit for discovering editors, e.g. Jane Stoddart, and writers, e.g. J. M. Barrie, and theologians, e.g. James Denney, when all he really

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1 Saintsbury, History of Nineteenth Century Literature, p. 174.
2 For a discussion of this change see F. Maurice, Life of F.D. Maurice, Vol. II, p. 321.

did was to recognize their ability, give them an oppostunity to use it and then give them full credit for it. When they became well-known they were still working for him, usually, and the sales of his periodicals increased because of the famous "names" who wrote for him. To examine his "discoveries" thoroughly is a study in itself, but some should be mentioned here at least. Nicoll disclaimed the title of "discoverer" but he took credit to himself for having stimulated the literary activity of Dr. Marcus Dods, Sir William M. Ramsay, Dr. Stalker, Principal George Adam Smith, Rev. Hugh Black, Dr. James Denney, Henry Drummond, and others who were spoken of as the brilliant "younger" theologians and Biblical scholars.[1] Dr. John Watson ("Ian Maclaren") was at first, as a theologian, a contributor to the Expositor, when Nicoll became aware of his amazing gift of character sketching. He constrained him to write, even suggesting the title, (Beside the Bonnie Briar Bush), and the result was that the book was an immense success.[2] W.R.N. had the insight to support the new move to make fiction palatable to the timid consciences of religious readers. So it was in the pages of the B.W. that many writers first received real recognition. Such writers included Jane Barlow, author of the Irish idylls, Bogland Studies; Frank T. Bullen; James Hocking; Annie S. Swan; John Buchan and his sister "O Douglas"; and Ellen Thorneycroft Fowler who later became the Hon. A. L. Felkin. Nicoll stimulated interest in the writings of "Mark Rutherford" (William Hale White) and the Rev. Samuel R. Crockett, who abandoned the ministry of the Free Kirk for the wider sphere of usefulness which the career of letters afforded him. He fostered the writers whose style

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1 That his hold on these men never ceased was evidenced by the fact that the majority of their books had been published by the B.W.'s proprietors, Hodder and Stoughton, for whom Nicoll was literary adviser.

2 For the whole story see W.R. Nicoll, "Ian Maclaren": Life of the Rev. John Watson, D.D., (London: Hodder and Stoughton, 1908) and the article by Watson's son, Mr. Frederick Watson, in Bookman, June, 1923.

became known as the "kailyard" School of Literature.[1] The School actually started with J. M. Barrie and his writings, which were first published signed by Barrie, as Gavin Ogilvy, in the B.W.. After Barrie switched from the "idyll" to the novel and the play, "Ian Maclaren" sketches satisfied the public for years, followed by Annie Swan, as "David Lyall," who after "Ian's" death sought to maintain the tradition. All of these, and more, owed their popularity, if not their beginning, to Robertson Nicoll and his British Weekly. Even Clement K. Shorter said,

> My own books on the Brontës and Barrow would never have been written but for his /Nicoll/ persistent exhortation. Had I not been as temperamentally indolent as he was industrious, and my mind concentrated on newspaper enterprise, I should have been induced to write half a dozen more books for him. He never tired of suggesting subjects to his friends.[2]

Also as literary adviser to Hodder and Stoughton, Nicoll prepared their autumn list of new books.[3]

Nicoll, himself, wrote few books as such although the list under his name in the British Museum catalogue numbers almost ninety items. He collected or assembled book-length groups of his weekly columns, philosophical musings, and sermons. He edited throughout his life a great series of volumes mostly religious in character. Most of the series which appeared in the B.W. were later issued in volumes, e.g. "The Religious Census," "Tempted London," "Claudius Clear," cum multis alii. "It is the

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1 For complete history of this, see J. H. Millar, A Literary History of Scotland, (London: T. Fisher Unwin, 1903), and W.M. Parker, "A Kailyard Pioneer," The Scots Magazine, November, 1950.

2 Clement Shorter, "More Personal Tributes," B.W., May 10, 1923.

3 Riddell's War Diary gives an interesting sidelight on this. "Nicoll gave us an interesting account of modern publishing. He said that during the whole of his thirty years' experience he had not had six good books submitted to him, apart from novels. He had had to suggest books to suitable authors. Nowadays all publishing was run on these lines." (September 11, 1914), p. 30.

best testimony to Dr. Nicoll's editorial insight that probably a larger number of distinctly successful books have been reprinted from the pages of the British Weekly than from any other religious paper."[1] The publications included a powerful series of social articles entitled "Tempted London"; "Books which have Influenced Me," by Robert Louis Stevenson and others; "Miss Meredith," by Amy Levy; and "When a Man's Single," by J.M. Barrie. But Nicoll was more of a distinguished literary figure than he was a great man of letters. What he wrote was written generally to serve ephemeral purposes. He did his main life's work as an editor.

> No other journalist possesses a political, a religious, and at the same time a literary influence to anything approaching the same degree. His work, indeed, in politics and theology bids fair to injure his ultimate position as a man of letters. With his wide knowledge of books, with his great critical faculty, Dr. Nicoll should have done more important work than his "Life of James Macdonell," which appeared eighteen years ago. That is the tragedy of the journalist's life. He is so absorbingly engaged in influencing his own day and generation that he has little time to prepare books that will give him title to the consideration of posterity.[2]

Nicoll seemed to realize that. He told his daughter that his book The Problem of Edwin Drood was the only really literary thing he had ever written. Many people were tempted to reproach him because they believed he should have devoted the same energy and skill that he had spent on "James Macdonell" and "Ian Maclaren," to treating of more immortal writers.

He had often intended to write more lasting works. His list of proposed works was long and impressive. He had always wanted to write a history of Victorian journalism. And Denney referred to "the series of papers you propose on the Atonement and Modern Literature."[3] One writer

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1 Kelso Mail, August 17, 1892.
2 By Clement Shorter, Glasgow Herald, April 15, 1908.
3 Letters of Denney, p. 38.

stated that Nicoll had proposed, "to edit a revision of Lockhart, and he /Nicoll/ had collected much on the subject."[1] Nicoll himself mentioned two proposed works. In the preface to his life of Jesus Christ, The Incarnate Saviour, he wrote, "Should this book meet with any acceptance, I hope at some future date to follow it with another on the 'Theology of Christ.'" In the prefatory note to The Garden of Nuts Nicoll said, "I have in preparation a history of Behmenism in England." Neither book materialized. Nicoll's biographer mentioned a long list of periodicals of various types and sizes which the editor of the B.W. had hoped to start, at one time or another.[2] But his magnum opus was to have been a history of literature of the period of Queen Victoria. This seemed to have been an ambition of his which he fostered most of his life. In the beginning he had hoped to write this work in collaboration with his brother. His brother died before they could complete it, yet Nicoll seems never to have stopped accumulating material.[3] His literary remains, after his death, revealed that Nicoll had been lent, or else had borrowed, documents which related to the private lives of famous literary persons. Most of these were, "dating from the eighties in which all the great British literary figures of the day, Stevenson included, confided to the young Free Kirk minister at Kelso the general intentions of their works and their methods of writing. These were responses to inquiries for information with a view

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1 W.S. Crockett, Bookman, June, 1923.
2 See Darlow, op. cit., pp. 326 f.
3 The majority of this material was issued in 1905-06 in twelve monthly parts as "The Bookman Illustrated History of English Literature." Later these monthly parts were issued in three volumes entitled A History of English Literature by W. Robertson Nicoll and Thomas Seccombe. In this latter work, Nicoll's hand seems to be in less evidence than Seccombe's.

to the projected literary history."[1] There were many other ideas forever sprouting in Nicoll's fertile mind but the few examples just stated are representative.

But a man is known, however, by what he accomplished, not by what he intended to do. He had great executive ability and many projects he was able to get under way because he obtained the right persons to carry them through. He could compel others to work along the lines of his conceptions and ideals. He knew exactly where to go for what he wanted. Thus he got Annie S. Swan to edit Woman at Home, St. John Adcock to take over the editing of the Bookman, and Jane Stoddart to do the lion's share of the British Weekly. Annie Swan commented, "When satisfied that you could do the work required he left you in peace to do it, and accepted what was submitted, believing you had done your very best. All who have ever been privileged to write for The British Weekly did their very best, because the standard has always been high there."[2] He was essentially a religious journalist, rather than a creative artist, with the extraordinary faculty for discovering conspicuous literary ability in other men, and of inspiring them with confidence and enthusiasm. But for his keen insight, many of the most popular Scottish men of letters might have died with all their music in them.

The strict use of his time was one thing, his amazing speed in reading and his sponge-like quality of retention was another, but his production of work, his "exports," was one of the real secrets behind Nicoll's success and influence. No one quality of his alone could have

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1 George Blake who wrote Barrie and the Kailyard School told this in connection with his being asked to investigate Nicoll's literary remains; quoted in Parker, Scots Magazine, November, 1950, p. 53.

2 Mrs. Burnett Smith (Annie S. Swan), "Personal Tribute," B.W., May 10, 1923.

done it. When he began the British Weekly he also began one of the most strenuous lives in the stremuous world of journalistic London. Yet it was carried on with indomitable pluck and energy, by a man who could have been without any generosity deemed an invalid. It was hard work and he admitted it. "It follows that no one should enter the profession /of journalism/ who is not prepared for the very hardest work that can be imagined."[1] But he liked it. "I cannot remember meeting a journalist who did not honestly like his work. He might have many faults to find with the conditions of his employment, his remuneration, and the like. But with journalism itself, he never had a quarrel."[2] He was continually preaching, in his writings, the doctrine of efficiency.[3] His own life was the model of efficiency - efficiency in the field of religious journalism. It seemed that he read, thought, spoke and listened only in terms of writing. Every sentence he uttered was in printable form. He was master of the adequate word - no more, no less. Nicoll found that a journalist who was also an editor, had greater labours than just writing. "What takes it out of him is the planning of articles, the collecting of news, the conducting of a large correspondence, the reading of manuscripts, and, above all, the effort to come to conclusions on all sorts of subjects."[4] He became aware how very few subjects could be written on without a great deal of reading beforehand. Writing reviews presupposed the reading of the books. The criticism was a minor act compared with the reading. As for his articles he declared that often a dozen books had to be consulted just for a single article.

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1 W.R. Nicoll, People and Books, p. 92.
2 Ibid, p. 101.
3 See such articles from Claudius Clear as "Firing Out the Fools" and "A Fellow by the Name of Rowan," etc., in Letters on Life, passim.
4 Claudius Clear, B.W., April 22, 1897.

He projected, edited, and completed several monumental undertakings such as The Expositor's Bible and The Expositor's Greek Testament. But his real contribution was as editor of the B.W.. This was based on the fact, not that he reached the heights he did because there was no competition - that would have been easy - but the field he entered was crowded, the competition was keen, and the death-rate among new journals was very high. In spite of all of those obstacles the B.W. grew steadily in length of column, in number of columns, in number of pages, in number of advertisements, and above all in number of readers. While the British Weekly was growing, its nearest counterpart, competitor and contemporary, the Christian World, was declining. For the sake of contrast it is interesting in view of the foregoing study to list briefly the progress of the Christian World. It had reached a circulation of 130,000 copies a week during the 1880's - the golden days of religious journalism. When it opposed the Gladstone Home Rule Bill of 1886 the paper lost "some thousands of readers," as it did again between 1901-05 when it opposed passive resistance to the Balfour Education Acts. At the turn of the century, along with other Nonconformist papers such as the Methodist Times, it had opposed the South African war as unnecessary and avoidable. It lost more readers when, during the 1914-18 war paper shortage, its price was increased from one penny to two pence. (The B.W. increased its price from one penny to two pence on March 15, 1917.) The Christian World's decline continued because of, "the decline of public interest in religious matters, and the slump in Church attendances and Sunday Schools, which had set in with the new century."[1] By 1925 its circulation "was just below 30,000 a week."[2]

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1 These statements are based on the writings of a Christian World editor, Arthur Porritt, More and More of Memories, pp. 76 f.

2 Ibid.

In comparison, the British Weekly gained readers as it grew and it became the largest selling religious journal by the end of the century. It maintained an impressive circulation and a remarkable influence up to the beginning of the 1914-18 war. Even then its decline was much slower than the majority of its contemporaries.

In the second half of the nineteenth century, it was a matter of course for the minister to be interested in politics. A religious periodical, therefore, not only had to have current items, but an editor who voiced his opinions on political problems. Nicoll, himself, took a very deep interest in politics; an interest that was almost as deep as his concern for religion. He was convinced that the nation's political problems could be solved only when the Spirit of Christ took possession of society, and the law of love prevailed. He kept insisting that Christian men cease frowning at politics and stop holding themselves aloof from it. Although he was a keen politician, and at times exercised great influence, his judgment was not infallible. Often he had to tread warily between conflicting views among Free Churchmen, and he was, sometimes, found to be taking a middle course. He remained aloof from issues about which he was in doubt, e.g. Woman Suffrage, or maybe it was that he felt he could not speak about it with a clear conscience and still voice the view of the majority of his readers. At times, when he was either unsure or unwilling to express his views upon a subject, he would get some one else, versed in the subject, to write articles for him. Many of those were signed and many were not. Only by thorough investigation can a leader be identified when it is not signed and yet it seemed obviously not Nicoll's. But in the great majority of cases he gave credit where credit was due. Regardless, his influence grew to such an extent that all

those politicians who were in any way dependent on Nonconformist support for their political opinions or personal position were careful to keep in touch with him. "It has been said that he was pontifical at times, and certainly no Pope in Rome ever held a more impervious sway."[1] He rose to such heights that he was knighted in 1909 for his extraordinary service to progressive politics, being the first parson to be called "Sir."

Nicoll's judgment often fell short of his usually high standard. A few examples of this will suffice. During the Down Grade Controversy Nicoll told his readers that Spurgeon would never leave the Baptist Union. Very shortly thereafter Spurgeon seceded from the Union. In the fight against seven-day journalism he assured his readers of the drastic threat that faced them, "perhaps the most serious battle that Christianity in this country has had to fight during the century."[2] Yet within a few years he became a close friend of Lord Riddell's who claimed, "I have just [June 23, 1912] started selling the News of the World in Scotland, thus being the first newspaper proprietor to sell a Sunday newspaper in that country."[3] Had Nicoll protested in his religious weekly he might have maintained his former position, but public opinion had changed and so had Nicoll's views. Two years later Lord Riddell was writing a weekly column for the B.W. which lasted for some time. In 1904, when the South African Chinese labour situation shocked the country, Nicoll simply made mention of it, although he might have been able to lead his readers into avenues of saner thought concerning the situation. In the temperance movement Nicoll advocated complete abstinence yet in his private life he never

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1 Glasgow Citizen, May 5, 1923.
2 See above, p. 135.
3 Lord Riddell's More Pages from my Diary, p. 71.

seemed to mind the use of alcohol by himself or his friends. It was also true that Nicoll sometimes disclosed the confidences of friends. Rarely, but on occasion, Nicoll was censored for using material, gained in private conversation, as the basis of a leading article.[1] Political friends of Nicoll's now and then sought his advice which, when he gave it, did not always agree with the tenets of sound politics.[2] Sometimes Nicoll's friendship made him overlook faults which he would not have overlooked otherwise, and yet at times he attacked old friends, e.g. Spurgeon and R. J. Campbell and J. H. Shakespeare when they were the centre of conflicts he wished to enter. Nicoll wrote Dr. Clifford a severe letter for not joining in the attack on J. H. Shakespeare when Nicoll was writing about him in the B.W.. Dr. Clifford's answer was a sharp contrast to Nicoll's attitude inasmuch as they were both friends of Mr. Shakespeare.[3]

Besides being a force politically, an influence on Lloyd George, and a confidant to M.P.'s, he accomplished many things concerning the country's social life. The "Tempted London" articles set in motion many forces which led to the improvement of conditions exposed in the series. He did delay seven-day journalism for a few years. He guided the people's thoughts during the Scottish Church Case. He created a saner outlook in regard to the Higher Criticism. He influenced opinion in the 1911-12 series of strikes. He was a force to contend with on the side of Welsh Disestablishment, and, despite his personal views, he was constantly supplying thoughts and sermon material which were a real influence in the cause of temperance.

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1 For an example of this see above, p. 158.
2 See Lord Riddell's War Diary, pp. 102, 170, 191.
3 The letter is printed in Darlow, op. cit., pp. 390-393.

In the Education Struggle, Nicoll's power with the masses was more readily seen. His championship of the Struggle began in 1902 and continued until the end of the 1914-18 war. In some respects this fight comprised one of the greatest episodes in Nicoll's long career. At least it gave the greatest actual evidence of his influence. Through his advocacy of passive resistance, and his continuous leaders and speeches on the subject, thousands of people who would not have heard of passive resistance otherwise, were ready to go to gaol rather than submit.

> In England, many thousands of Nonconformists have appeared before the magistrates to be treated as criminals, many of our most honoured Christian ministers and laymen - some in this very city of Leeds - have been in prison again and again. In all probability there are many more to follow them. They have been put to this suffering on account of their refusal to submit to a law that violates their conscience, a law which, by the admission of those who passed it, is not just, and cannot last.[1]

Later Liberal Governments tried to amend the Education Act of 1902 but they were prevented by the House of Lords. As time went on the Liberals found that the County Education Authority exerted more control over the Church Schools than they had thought would ever be exerted. Passive resistance, however, had been an opposition which caused the final passing of the Bill of 1902 in a form which placed the religious instruction in the Church Schools under the authority of the Managers as a whole. This ended the parish minister's exclusive direction over that instruction. The protest against the Act of 1902 has gradually died away, but then the last generation's attitude towards religious controversy has changed considerably since the beginning of the twentieth century. Nor are Nonconformity and the Church as hostile toward each other since then. Neither is the Church's clergy as antagonistic to ways other than her own nor is

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1 Crusader, June 29, 1905.

there the need of Nonconformist hostility which was necessary to keep them in check. The Church's clergy are less apt, in these days, to look upon themselves as the rulers of their world in general. Then too, the change in the nation's interests in politics must be remembered.

> The political aspect of the quarrel between Church and Dissent had been the life-blood of the Whig and Tory, the Liberal and Conservative factions in the constituencies, from Charles II to Victoria. In our own day the reassortment of parties on a basis of industrial and social questions only, with no reference to religion, was the prime reason of the disappearance of the Liberal and the advent of the Labour Party. Class-consciousness had superseded chapel-consciousness. The excitement over Balfour's Education Bill was the last party fight on the old ecclesiastical lines.[1]

But in its early days the passive resistance movement, backed so vehemently by Nicoll, served a purpose, that of opposition and protest, a purpose which it fulfilled admirably.

Under Nicoll's editorship the B.W. existed during two wars. The editor disliked aggression and pacificism. In both wars he felt certain that Britain was fighting an aggressor; so in both wars he backed his country with his powerful leader-writing. Each time he stirred men to serve their country. During the Boer War many other religious journals, e.g. the Christian World and the Methodist Times opposed Nicoll's stand, claiming that they thought the South African war to be unnecessary and avoidable. But Nicoll was often in touch with Church-ministers of the Transvaal and the Orange Free State and was well informed on both sides of the argument. During the 1914-18 war Nicoll's influence was of real assistance in swaying the Nonconformists to support the war effort. The B.W.'s aid was enlisted in the recruitment drives. Its "War Notes" gave first hand, inside information, which helped dispel rumours, and clarified conflicting reports. Its leaders stirred readers to renewed efforts, and

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1 Trevelyan, British History in the Nineteenth Century and After, pp. 428 f.

calmed, consoled, encouraged, soothed and strengthened them. It raised £5,000 to buy Y.M.C.A. huts, and it urged total abstinence in war-time. But along with all of the spiritual enrichment and the consolation which Nicoll gave through his leaders, he was continually urging his readers to think of the enemy as the Anti-Christ, and he almost pleaded with them to pray for the enemy's complete destruction. Along this line he became more vehement towards the end of the war and after the armistice. He cried out fiercely for vengeance on German war crimes. But it must not be forgotten that Nicoll was not alone in this viewpoint. A typical example was the reaction of the Church in Scotland.

> Only about a dozen members of the United Free Assembly could be got to vote for a motion deploring the harshness and severity of the Treaty, and declaring that mainly by forgiveness, generosity, and goodwill could a noble or abiding peace be established; while in the Church of Scotland Assembly not a voice was raised in that strain. So the Church, which had served the State so efficiently as a recruiting agency, failed when the opportunity came to give a brave enough lead to the peacemakers who, within and without her borders, were pointing out the more excellent way of reconciliation.[1]

It was this feeling which was quite general which would have made any really religious appeal exceedingly difficult, but Nicoll had often been alone before when storms had blown and he refused the opportunity to champion the cause to make the peace real and lasting on a Christian basis.

Nicoll's love for and defence of the Free Church was a lifetime passion. It led people to say, "Undoubtedly he was one of the two or three greatest and strongest Free Churchmen of our times."[2] He also insisted upon the children's rightful place in the worship service, in

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1 Fleming, A History of the Church in Scotland, 1875-1927, p. 98.
2 Dr. Charles Brown, "Free Church Notes," Daily Telegraph, May 15, 1923.

conjunction with which he promoted the Young Worshippers' League, a programme which is in use even today. When the newer criticism confronted the older evangelical thought, he greatly helped in liberating the soul of the Free Churches from the inherited prejudices of the past by showing how, without losing touch with the best scholarship, the criticisms which were intended to be destructive might be used to bolster and strengthen the strongholds of orthodox belief. He gave invaluable aid in preparing men for the expositions of Scripture in the end of the nineteenth century, when the assaults of science and scholarship made many feel as if they had "seen the summer sun shine out of an empty heaven, and felt with a pang of infinite loneliness that the Great Companion was dead."[1] In the Expositor which he edited he provided opportunities for exegesis and speculation to experts who agreed neither with him nor with each other. He never ceased to preach, for he believed as Carlyle did, that editors were the preachers of the modern world. "I place the front-page article in The British Weekly, written when Dr. Nicoll was in his prime, as one of the great formative forces in the religious mind of the last generation. Amid all the confused and confusing sounds of those uncertain days, his word was like a trumpet. It kept thousands in the road . . . ."[2] In his theology he was evangelical, sane, not narrow or obscurantist, but enlightened and far-seeing. In him were united "the Scotman's jealous guardianship of doctrinal orthodoxy with breadth of sympathy and catholicity of outlook."[3] His theology was tempered by his love of mysticism, and his humanism. In Nicoll's time, and even today, Christianity needed some one who had a

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1 Quoted in Ernest H. Jeffs, "Hale White," Great Christians, Forman editor, p. 610.
2 Dr. J. H. Jowett, "Personal Tributes," B.W., May 10, 1923.
3 Harry Escott, God Signs His Name, p. 15.

sufficiency of spiritual insight and love of humanity to unify theory and life, and Nicoll had this gift highly developed. He "helped thousands of men and women to a kind of success in life which had nothing to do with money or fame . . . the greatest service Nicoll rendered to his generation . . . was to teach men and women that to live the good life: the life spent in worthy interests, studies, enthusiasms, the life of the Christian humanist, is not only the best wisdom but the best fun."[1]

Nicoll had enemies; being a man of courage, he expected that. He was not merely a man but an institution, which might explain a great deal of belittling and depreciation of him which a great many people had indulged in. Most people seem to like having a kick at an institution. And it was most often the case that those who kicked the hardest knew the least about that which they attacked. Those writers who attacked him most vehemently seem absurd to the student of Nicoll, by their very lack of any real knowledge of their subject. He had faults, for he was very human, and it was his human qualities which drew so many followers to him through his writings. It was those followers who in a poll, in 1914, for the "Greatest Living Scotsman," voted in equal place with Lord Rosebery.[2] And it was those followers who voted Nicoll as one of the "Forty Immortals" who should be elected members of a British Academy of Letters.[3] Many tributes could be listed from the innumerable ones which have been written, but possibly they could all be summed up in the phrases written by the American publisher of Hodder and Stoughton's works and the owner of the American edition of the Bookman and a personal friend of Nicoll's for many years:

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1 Ernest H. Jeffs, William Robertson Nicoll, The Christian World, October 15, 1951.

2 Sunday at Home, January, 1914.

3 This vote was taken by John O'London's Weekly, June 4, 1921, q.v.

Scotland has produced a proud army of great men - bankers, merchants, scholars, soldiers, statesmen. It remained for Robertson Nicoll to make vocal and prominent what has come to be known as the Scottish school of theology, and the Scottish school of literature, with particular emphasis on fiction of the nobler sort. A Scot by birth, tradition, choice, and inclination, Nicoll became a greater Briton, - a leader of Anglo-Saxons and Celts wherever they were to be found on the footstool. From London he gave to Scotland a finer understanding of the Sassenach - a more liberal view of life and living. To London and to England he brought genuine cultural attainment. He was counsellor, confidant, and friend of those in high places. Never did Knight more faithfully or valiantly serve a country and a crown. I have little claim to write of him. Yet my chronicles would be minus one of the high spots of my life if I did not do some little reverence to his life and memory. For he never once disappointed my admirations - never could I find the slightest suggestion of feet of clay in my idol.[1]

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1 Doran, Chronicles of Barrabas, p. 76.

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